NEW
NICK CARTER WEEKLY

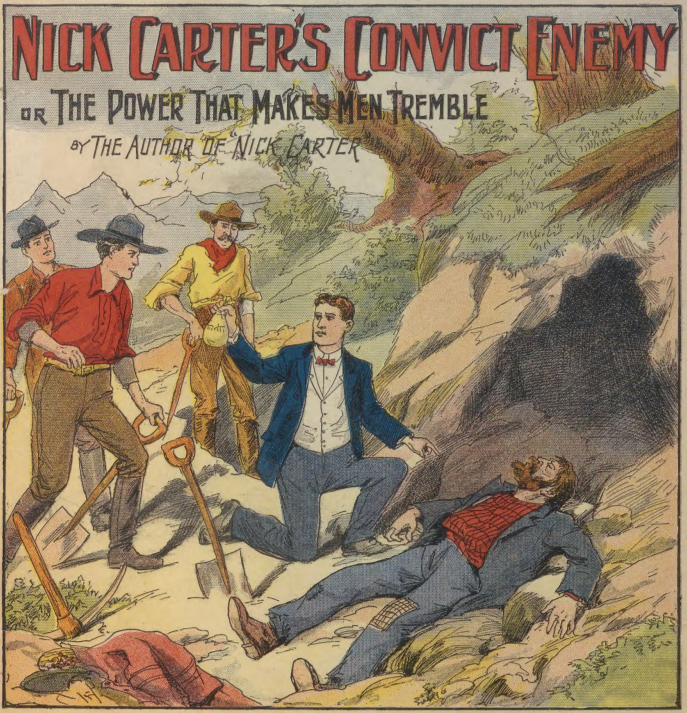
Issued Weekly. By Subscription $2.50 per year. Entered as Second Class Matter at New York Post Office by STREET & SMITH, 238 William St., N. Y.

No. 432. Price, Five Cents.

NICK CARTER'S CONVICT ENEMY

OR THE POWER THAT MAKES MEN TREMBLE

BY THE AUTHOR OF NICK CARTER



Nick turned the body over. One hand clutched a leathern bag. The detective disengaged and lifted it. The weight told its story.

NEW NICK CARTER WEEKLY

Issued Weekly. By Subscription $2.50 per year. Entered as Second Class Matter at the N. Y. Post Office, by STREET & SMITH, *238 William St., N. Y. Entered according to Act of Congress in the year 1905, in the Office of the Librarian of Congress, Washington, D. C.*

No. 432. NEW YORK, April 8, 1905. Price Five Cents.

NICK CARTER'S CONVICT ENEMY;

OR,

The Power that Makes Men Tremble.

Edited by CHICKERING CARTER.

CHAPTER I.

THE STOLEN DIAMONDS.

"It is not for the purpose of adding to my store of worldly wealth, Mr. Carter, that I desire to recover the diamonds. It is for the protection of society."

"You fear, then, that the stones, or their equivalent in money, may be used for criminal purposes, Mr. Garrett?"

"Yes. They were stolen by a professional thief, and now that the thief is in jail, in the shadow of the gallows, he will leave no means untried to regain his liberty. The diamonds are worth three hundred thousand dollars. That is a large sum of money, Mr. Carter. It is sufficient to corrupt judge and jury."

"There is little likelihood of that, I think. The prosecution will see that a jury of reputable citizens is selected. But there are other ways in which three hundred thousand dollars might be brought into play."

"My wife is even more anxious than I am that the diamonds shall be recovered. She is, to properly express it, virtuously vindictive over the treatment which she and I received at the hands of the league of criminals, and she would be well satisfied if James Dorrant were to mount the gallows with the knowledge that all his evil plans had failed."

"I understand her feelings perfectly," said Nick. "You were threatened with death and her life was actually attempted. It is small wonder that she hates bitterly the man who was the cause of your suffering and hers. Speaking for myself, I will say that it would please me exceedingly to relieve Mr. Dorrant of his last prop. He swore to have my life, you know."

"Challenged you to come to California and enter the lists against him. Yes, I know. And you came, and the result is that Mr. Dorrant will in a few days be tried for

murder, with an absolute certainty of conviction by an honest jury."

The foregoing conversation took place in Nick Carter's quarters on Powell Street, San Francisco. Nick had been summoned to the city by Jared Casley, a capitalist, who had been robbed of three hundred thousand dollars' worth of diamonds, but he might not have obeyed the summons if the murder of a bogus Nick Carter, occurring at this time in San Francisco, had not caused him to believe that a criminal of crooked mind, one James Dorrant, had committed or planned the murder, in order to induce the detective to cross the continent. Dorrant had threatened Nick's life in St. Petersberg some years before. Nick accepted the implied challenge, arriving in San Francisco on the night of the murder of Casley, and after some surprising adventures succeeded in landing Dorrant in jail. While on the track of the criminal the great detective had opportunity to rescue from a perilous situation a beautiful young woman named Grace Fairleigh, who, a week before the opening of this story, had become the wife of Roland Garrett. Garrett himself had been saved from death by Chick, Nick's plucky and astute assistant. The gathering of evidence to make an unassailable case for the prosecution had kept Nick and Chick busy for a fortnight.*

Garrett, who was a young man of handsome face and agreeable manners, but who was lacking in will power, was Jared Casley's heir, and Nick, who had great respect for the woman Garrett had married, was confronted with the belief that with his rich inheritance, and under the influence of his wife's charm and stronger will, he would lead an even, contented life.

"It will be no easy task to find the diamonds," said Nick, "for the hunt will have to be made in two directions, neither having any workable connection with the other. With the information already obtained it is certain that Dorrant and his partner, Michael Lansky, together unearthed the diamonds in Golden Gate Park, and that they then and there divided them. Lansky is dead and Dorrant is in jail. It is out of reason to suppose that Lansky told Dorrant where he intended to secrete his own share of the treasure, while it is proper to presume that Dorrant's knowledge of the spot where his share is concealed is locked up in his own breast. So you see that the search will be attended with difficulties."

"Yes, yes, I see," said Garrett, despondingly. "The difficulties are insurmountable."

"No, not insurmountable, Mr. Garrett"—Nick's jaws squared—"for I am going to find the diamonds if I have to stay in San Francisco a year."

Garrett's face cleared instantly.

"When Nick Carter makes that kind of a statement," he said, "it means something. I believe you will succeed. In your dictionary there is no such word as fail."

*See "The Man with the Crooked Mind," No. 431.

Nick looked grave. "Don't be too sure of me," he said. "I may not succeed. There is a tough job before me, and I may fail in mastering it."

Chick, followed by Patsy, entered at this juncture. Patsy had been in the city but a few days. He had expected to arrive in time to be of assistance in working up the case against Dorrant, but had been detained in New York.

After they had been posted in reference to the diamond case Garrett took his leave.

"Now," began Nick, when the three were alone, "we've got to prepare for some hard, intricate work. We will make the start on the Lansky end. After you had rescued Garrett near Alviso, Chick, you met and shot Lansky. He was taken to a ranch house, the house of a countryman, and there died, living about half an hour after he was shot. Do you know if he had opportunity to speak to his countryman before he died?"

"No, he spoke to no one. And if he could and would have spoken to his countryman—his name, by the way, is Dimitri Goloff—the opportunity was not afforded, for I kept Goloff out of the room."

"The ranch house and surroundings, as well as the person of Lansky, were searched before I left the place," Chick continued, "but without result."

"Still it may be possible," said Nick, "that this Goloff had knowledge of the location of the diamonds. A little investigation may show whether or not he has, or has had, them in his possession. Patsy, here's a job for you. Go to every pawn shop in this city and find out, if you can, if any attempt, successful or otherwise, has been made to pawn or sell any unset diamonds within the past month."

When the door had closed on Patsy, Nick gave his attention to the Dorrant end of the case.

"Do you remember, Chick, what Dorrant said when he found himself under arrest?"

"I remember the substance of what you told me, Nick. The intimation was given that he was not at the end of his rope; that although you might think you had won in the game with him, there was an excellent chance that you might lose."

"Correct. I have been giving some thought to his words, Chick. They were not uttered as a grand-stand play. Dorrant would not have entered the trap which I had prepared for him if he had not had something up his sleeve, something which might be of powerful assistance in the event of his arrest. What is that reserve card? The diamonds, or their money equivalent, with which to fee an unscrupulous lawyer and corrupt a jury? Possibly. I do not think, however, that he had such a plan in contemplation. It would be a desperate chance, and it is not a plan to evoke confidence. No, when Dorrant so sneeringly asserted that he would never mount the gallows, he had something in his mind, something which did not contemplate the packing of a jury box."

"Perhaps he was figuring on an escape from the county jail."

"Hardly that, Chick. The county jail is a strong, well-guarded place, and, knowing me as he does, he would naturally infer that I would urge upon Chief Wittman the necessity of extra precautions against an escape. And the jail, particularly that portion in which Dorrant is confined, has never been so well guarded as it is at the present time. There is no chance of escape from the jail, and Dorrant knew there would not be, when he laughed at me after I had trapped him."

"Have you any idea of what is in his mind, Nick?"

"No. It is something we must discover, however, and I have a plan that may work. It has worked before and it has failed before, but Dorrant is a peculiar fellow, and he may bite at a bait that other fish might disdain. I shall try to surround it with some original dressing, expecting, of course, that Chief Wittman will lend me all possible assistance."

"What is your plan?"

"It is an old one, as I have intimated, with variations. You will have the star part. You must be arrested in the regular way as a desperate criminal, and you will be placed in the cell with Dorrant. He will suspect you are a spy, but circumstances, I hope, will make him change his opinion. Your crime will be assault to murder, for the purpose of robbery. Some evening—to-morrow, I think—you will assault a tourist coming from the Tenderloin district. You will knock him down and relieve him of his money and watch. A patrolman will witness the assault and will give chase, shots will be exchanged and you will fall with a bullet in your neck."

"Why not in the heart, Nick? Make it lasting while you are about it," said Chick, with a grin.

"No, for dead men can't do county-jail stunts. You will be taken to the Receiving Hospital, where the surgeon will find upon examination that your wound is not a serious one."

"That surgeon is a man after my own heart."

"He will patch you up, and you will then be taken to the county jail, pending an examination, which, I will say, will be indefinitely postponed on account of the serious condition of the man you assaulted. Now, for the work that is work. You will ingratiate yourself with Dorrant—if anyone can do it, you can—and when he sees by the daily papers that an assault was actually committed, that day by day the condition of the assaulted man is reported, that the chief has hunted up your record and has found that you are one of the most hardened crooks that ever came out of the East, that you have been burglar, train robber and footpad, he will be inclined to trust you, perhaps give you his confidence."

"In the meantime I'll try to inject a little confidence into myself."

"You'll succeed, Chick, all right. Now, what you want to find out is: What is Dorrant's plan of escaping the gallows and also where he has hidden his share of the diamonds. You've got a hard proposition to tackle, but you are the boy to tackle it."

"I'll do my best, Nick. I have a notion that the diamonds figure in the plot to escape. Whatever Dorrant intends to do, money is bound to help him."

"You are probably right.

"Now as to the hold-up business. Have you picked out the holdee?"

"Yes, he is before you."

"What? You?"

"Yes, and that will insure the success of the deception. I'll fix up matters with the chief, and he'll give the arresting patrolman his cue and arrange the hospital end with the surgeon. The newspapers will get their story, day by day, from the chief, so there will be no hitch in the program. The bloody-neck business can be fixed up by means of a bulb filled with the real article, obtained from a slaughter house."

The two detectives were still talking of the scheme of deception when Patsy returned. He was out of breath and there was a broad smile on his face.

"Well, Patsy," said Nick, pleasantly, "have you already finished?"

"Yes, sir. I have visited every pawn shop in the city."

"And have you made a discovery?"

"I think so. There was only one shop—Isaacson's, on Pine Street—where any attempt to sell unset diamonds has been made. Isaacson said the diamonds, if genuine, would have been worth at least one hundred and fifty thousand dollars."

"Were they not genuine?"

"No, Mr. Carter. They were paste, and when the man who brought them was informed of the fact he nearly had a fit."

"Who was he? Did you learn?"

"Isaacson said the man did not give his name, but he discovered his nationality. He was a Russian."

"Couldn't he describe him?"

"He was tall, thickset and had a hoarse voice like a foghorn."

"Dimitri Goloff!" exclaimed Chick. "Goloff for a thousand dollars."

Nick Carter's eyes brightened. "Patsy," said he, earnestly and feelingly, "you have done well. You have settled a most important point and made our work much easier."

"What's your opinion, Nick?" asked Chick.

"My opinion is that Dorrant is in possession of the diamonds, that Michael Lansky never had in his hands his share of the plunder and that by hocus pocus, 'watch me closely and you won't see how I do it,' Dorrant substi-

tuted the paste for the real and kept the whole of the genuines for himself."

CHAPTER II.

A DISCOVERY AND A SURPRISE.

Roland Garrett had refused to prosecute Dimitri Goloff for being a party to the young man's forcible detention at Goloff's ranch, near Alviso. Garrett had been taken to the ranch by Michael Lansky, but there was evidence that Goloff had never before been associated with either Lansky or Dorrant in the crimes committed in San Francisco. Goloff had a wife who was an epileptic, and sympathy for her, who needed a husband's care, had much to do with Garrett's disinclination to have Goloff arrested and tried. In this course Garrett was cordially supported by his wife.

Aware of the good luck which had attended Goloff's connection with the last scheme of Dorrant and Lansky, which was to hold Garrett a prisoner in the hope of looting the Casley estate, of which Garrett was sole heir, Nick Carter thought it probable that he might enlist Goloff's co-operation in the plot he was weaving for the recovery of the diamonds.

Goloff had expressed gratitude for Garrett's clemency, and had promised to pay the debt if ever the opportunity should present itself. The discovery that Lansky's share of the diamonds was worthless had come at an opportune time and ought to make easy the work of enlisting Goloff's services in the campaign against Dorrant. The Russian, amazed and angered over the cheat that Dorrant had practiced on Lansky, a cheat by the operation of which he, Goloff, was the actual sufferer, would naturally look upon Dorrant as an enemy.

"Yes," thought Nick, "gratitude for Garrett's kindness, and hatred of the man who has despoiled him of a fortune, ought to make Mr. Goloff a strong ally."

Nick resolved to take a trip to Alviso as soon as the affair of the bogus hold up and Chick's arrest had been carried out. In this respect everything went off smoothly. Chick did his part to the queen's taste and was placed in the cell with Dorrant as a criminal fully as desperate and as much to be feared as the man whose trial for murder was close at hand.

Early on the morning after the arrest Nick had a short talk with Patsy, and soon after took the train for Alviso, and at noon was knocking at the door of the Goloff ranch house. A red-cheeked, buxom Irish girl answered the knock.

"Is the boss here?" asked Nick, in the free-and-easy manner of the Californian laborer.

"Misther Hennessey? Sure an' he's not. He's in Vallyjoe."

"In Vallejo? Mr. Hennessey? I thought some other hombre bunked here."

"Well, ye t'ought wrong. Maybe ye mean that Rushin' felly, Go-a-loff. He's not here anny more. He's bin afther sellin' out."

"Sold out, has he? And when did he sell out, Norah?"

"Me name's not Norah, ye blatherer," replied the girl, with a flash of her black eyes. "It's Ellen."

"I beg your pardon, Ellen," said Nick, humbly. "I know a Norah who beats the orchestra for style and beauty. You look like her and her name, therefore, came to my lips before I could check myself."

Mollified at the compliment, the girl smiled and giggled.

"I have a coosin be the name of Norah. Yis, Norah do be a pretty name, I do be thinkin'."

"So is Ellen. And when did you say Mr. Goloff sold out?"

"T'ree days ago, an' day before yistherday he pulled up an' wint away, lock, shtock an' barrel."

"Where did he go? Do you know?"

"He said he wud be afther goin' to th' ould coonthry, and that's Rushy, I'm thinkin'."

"What induced him to sell, I wonder?"

"Maybe he's achin' to fight thim Jap fellys. He wint to town an' towld an agint he wanted to quit, an' the agint said he had a man up in Vallyjoe who wud take the place if the ter-rms were fair. The nixt day Misther Hennessey came down an' closed the thrade. I have been wurrukin' for Misther Hennessey an' he put me here fornint the time when he cud come himself. That's all I do be knowin' about the matther. An' who be's you that wants to know so much? Ye look like a harvester or a Chanymin boss."

"I am a friend of Mr. Goloff, and I am very sorry that he is gone. Perhaps I may get on his track. He may not have left the State. Do you know in which direction he went—toward San José or San Francisco?"

"I t'ink he wint be boat to San Francisky."

"Thank you. You have been very kind. Good-day and good luck."

Nick touched his hat and walked away.

On the road to Alviso he readjusted his thinking cap. An unlooked-for complication had presented itself. Dorrant's mysterious plot to regain his liberty had begun to work, for there was no doubt in the detective's mind that the sudden disappearance of Goloff was due to the agency of the criminal in the San Francisco jail. Adopting this theory, as he felt he must, he would have to admit that Dorrant had some friend on the outside who had acted as his representative in dealing with Goloff. Who could he be? Garrett's knowledge of the personnel of the league of criminals was thorough and his revelations had been sustained by another member of the league, one Sergius Wykoff, who had been arrested shortly after the trapping of Dorrant. Wykoff and his brother had each pleaded guilty of the murder of Casley and were now in San Quentin prison awaiting the execution of the death penalty. They could have no such interest in Goloff as to

attempt to use him to further the schemes of Dorrant, for they were now Dorrant's bitter enemies. The diamonds, which, according to league rules, should have been divided equally among the members of the league, had been appropriated to his own use by Dorrant, and the Wykoffs had been tricked. No, the Wykoffs would never move a hand in behalf of Dorrant. And neither could they be expected to act in favor of justice, even if they had the power, for the day of execution was but two days off and they had more than once cursed the day that witnessed Nick Carter's arrival in San Francisco.

Dismissing the Wykoffs as not worthy of serious consideration, Nick confessed himself as unable to think of anyone who would be likely, for either money or friendship, to work for Dorrant. There was a possibility that the real estate agent who had made the sale of the Goloff ranch might be able to help him.

Arrived in Alviso, Nick went to the agent's office. The man he sought was sitting in a chair with his feet on the desk, puffing at a brier-wood pipe. He was large, loose-limbed, with sharp, but not unpleasant features, and keen, honest eyes. Asked for information concerning Goloff, the agent said the Russian had not yet left town.

This was good news.

"Do you know where he may be found?" asked Nick.

"I saw him down at the wharf an hour ago."

The detective would have set out at once to find the man, but there were one or two other questions he desired to ask. In the event of failure to come upon Goloff, anything that the agent knew might prove of value.

"How long is it since Goloff made up his mind to sell out?"

"About ten days ago," said the agent.

"Did he give you his reasons for desiring to leave the ranch?"

"Yes. He said his reputation had suffered from connection with the Garrett case. To oblige a countryman, whom he had looked upon as honest, he had taken into his house, for temporary keeping, a young man who had been represented to him as insane. When the truth came out his neighbors refused to believe that he had been hoodwinked, and asserted that he had known all the while that Garrett was not insane; that he was, in fact, a paid confederate in the plot of abduction."

"Has he had any visitors lately?"

"The day before he came to my office to engage me to arrange the sale he was about town with a red-whiskered man of medium size."

"Did you observe the man closely?"

"No. He never came to the office and I never met him face to face. He was well dressed, and I took him for a city man."

Nick thanked the agent for his information and went out. The agent accompanied him to the sidewalk. The detective had started in the direction of the wharf when a sudden exclamation from the agent caused him to wheel quickly.

"Why, there's Goloff now—up the street."

Nick looked and saw a man some two hundred yards away, just mounting a bicycle. A loud shout for him to stop had no effect. Without turning his head in the direction of the detective, Goloff rode rapidly away toward San José.

"I must see that man," said Nick, sharply. "Is there a bicycle about here that I can hire?"

"Yes, there's mine," said the agent, and, hurrying to the rear of the little frame building that served for his office, he found his wheel and brought it to the detective.

Nick took out his purse and fished out two twenties. "Here," he said to the agent, "you don't know me, and business is business. If I don't return the wheel keep the money."

Without more words Nick was off.

Turning the corner two blocks away, he came upon the straight road to San José. Goloff could be discerned a little more than a quarter of a mile ahead. Nick pedaled for all he was worth and gradually lessened the distance. He was congratulating himself over the prospect of soon overhauling his man when Goloff suddenly left the road and dashed through an open gateway into the yard of a large, unpainted building that might have been used for dwelling purposes, though it looked more like a huge granary.

Before the structure Nick dismounted, crossed to the sidewalk and rested his wheel against the fence. The building had two windows in front, and these were neither curtained nor shuttered. But dust and cobwebs had so covered them that no part of the interior could be seen. There were other indications that the house, if house it was, had been unoccupied for some time. The Russian had entered by the side driveway gate, which was open. The smaller front gate, opposite the door, was hanging by one hinge, and tall grass grew in the walk from the gate to the door.

Nick went around to the rear, which had neither barn nor outhouses. Goloff had disappeared and so had his wheel. The detective knocked at the back door—once, twice, thrice.

No answer.

Each knock gave forth a loud, hollow sound. He tried the door. It was locked. And yet the Russian must be inside, for he could not have escaped from the rear, for beyond the building was an open field of more than a thousand acres.

Returning to the front, the great detective went up the steps and knocked several times on the door, there being neither bell pull, button nor other modern contrivance. Still no answer.

The knob was tried and the door yielded. It had not been locked. Nick pushed it wide open without stepping

inside, and from the threshold looked into a large, bare room. An inch of dust lay upon the uncarpeted floor, but there were tracks of shoes, which gave evidence that some person had recently been in the apartment.

The detective looked at the ceiling, and then gave a spring and landed inside the room, five or six feet from the doorway. He then wheeled so as to face the entrance, and, as he did so, a man's feet struck the floor in front of the doorway with a thud that shook the building. An open trapdoor overhead betrayed the means of entrance. Nick, who had allowed nothing about the room to escape his eye, had noticed the trap and had formed the correct conclusion regarding its presence as affecting himself.

The jump from the attic, eight feet above, brought the jumper to his knees, and also on a line with a thirty-eight caliber revolver, held menacingly in the right hand of the detective.

CHAPTER III.

THE MYSTERIOUS ALLY.

"If you had jumped on my shoulders, the job would have been a softer one," said Nick, sarcastically. "Don't you want to try it again? If at first you don't succeed, you know."

The man, who was Goloff, had his hands, as well as his knees, on the floor. At Nick's words he lifted one hand, but at the stern command, "Drop it!" immediately lowered it again to the floor.

The detective stepped forward for the purpose of disarming and binding the Russian, when the noise of the opening of the door at the back caused him to stop and turn his head. What he saw gave him no comfort. A man with red whiskers and a cold, determined face stood in the doorway with a pistol pointed at Nick's head.

"Make but the slightest movement," said the man, in a harsh, chest voice, "and you are a dead one."

The detective did not move. He was in a perilous position, but he was not utterly dismayed. There was some comfort in the thought that the man did not desire his death, otherwise he would have fired at the moment of his entrance upon the scene.

"He won't try to kill me unless in defense of his liberty or his life," thought Nick, "and it is probable that he will soon have the provocation."

That the man was Dorrant's agent Nick was positive. The voice was evidently disguised, and the red whiskers were probably false. Nick looked at him searchingly and was satisfied that he had never met him before. He was a man of force, that was apparent, and at the moment he seemed to have the game in his own hands.

"What would you have me do?" asked the detective, quickly.

"Hand over your pistol to Goloff."

"All right. What can't be cured must be endured, I suppose."

Goloff, now on his feet, advanced to receive the pistol, but as he put out his hand Nick, as quick as lightning, darted behind him. Goloff was a tall man, taller than Nick, and for the moment the Russian stood as a wall between the man with red whiskers and the detective. They were both on a line with the door, and before Goloff could change his position Nick was out of doors. A bullet struck the door jamb just as he reached the open air.

At the same time was heard a violent pounding at the rear of the building, to be succeeded in a moment by the crash of glass. Without an instant's hesitation, the detective, who had not attempted to leave the yard, but had flattened himself against the side of the building close to the entrance, advanced to the doorway to meet Goloff, just in the act of coming out. One blow given with all the force of his strong right arm and the Russian measured his length on the ground. Then came quick footsteps across the room and Nick looked up into the face of Patsy.

Not until Goloff was securely bound did Patsy speak.

"I thought the time had come to give you a little assistance, Mr. Carter," he said, "but it seems that I wasn't needed. There was only one man after all."

Nick showed his surprise.

"Only one man?" he repeated. "There were two. Where is the red-whiskered piker? Didn't you see him?"

Patsy now exhibited surprise.

"See him? No. I was at the back door when the shot was fired, and I tried to break in. Finding I couldn't work the door, I smashed my way through the window and came into the back room. There was no one there. You have been around there, and you know there is but one window in the back part of the shebang, so if there had been a man there, and of course there was, because you say so, he must have vanished through the floor."

"Through the floor he did go, then, and we have probably lost him. Your appearance scared him off. Perhaps it is just as well that he did escape," Nick continued, as he noted Patsy's grieved expression, "for we've got this fellow and he may tell us all we want to know."

The Russian was dragged to the back room, which was about half the size of the other, and then Nick began an investigation. A trapdoor in the floor was soon found. Lifting it, steps leading to a deep cellar were disclosed. All was dark below. Producing his bull's-eye, the detective lighted it and turned the rays upon the steps. They ended on a cemented floor. Kneeling, Nick moved the lantern about in an endeavor to penetrate to all parts of the cellar. The floor was littered with curios, odds and ends, broken bottles, a large melting pot, the remains of a forge, steel implements, parts of a lathe and broken boxes and kegs. At the further end of the cellar was a door, partly open. While Nick was looking at it it slowly closed. "You're there, all right," said the detective, to

himself, "and you're waiting to catch a sucker. I am afraid I shall not be able to accommodate you."

The immediate surroundings of the stairs were given the closest scrutiny, and when the investigation, which occupied but a few moments, was concluded Nick whispered: "Patsy, go outside, front way, walk forward thirty or forty feet and lie down in the grass. In that position keep one eye on the building and the other on the approaches."

"All right, Mr. Carter."

When Patsy had gone Nick unlocked the back door and dragged Goloff a hundred feet away from the building, left him lying in the tall grass and then went to the window by means of which Patsy had entered the back room. This window was but a few feet from the open trap. In Nick's hand was a large stone, which he had picked up near the building. Resting himself on the window sill, he poised the stone and then, with all his might and with perfect accuracy of aim, flung it at the second step on the stairs, and on the instant leaped back from the window to the ground.

A deafening report, followed by the crashing of timbers and so violent an oscillation of the earth's surface that the detective was flung backward heavily into the grass, occurred on the instant that the stone struck the stair. When Nick arose dizzily to his feet the building was a mass of ruins. Going over to Goloff, he lay down beside the man.

"That was a neat trick of yours," said the Russian, in excellent English, "and I hope it has settled Red Whiskers."

Nick looked hard at Goloff, and was met with a frank look in return.

"Why do you hope your partner, or your employer—he was one or the other—lost his life?"

"I have no use for him. He would have led me into trouble."

"Would have led you into trouble? Doesn't it strike you that he has already done that?"

"No. He has led me out of trouble."

Goloff spoke with such sincerity that Nick's hopes rose. He would probably prove an easy subject to deal with.

"I presume you mean that you are ready to sever all connection with Red Whiskers and give your allegiance to the cause that I appear to represent."

"That's it. I was a fool to go into the affair in the first place; but Red Whiskers pulled the wool over my eyes."

"Will you explain, Mr. Goloff?"

"I'll tell you all I know, yes, and I hope you will let me go after I have told."

"Before you begin let me inform you that I am a friend of Roland Garrett, the young man who was so generous as to refuse to prosecute you for forcibly detaining him at your ranch."

The Russian smiled.

"I knew that all the time," he said. "Red Whiskers told me you were Garrett's friend."

"He did, eh? And what else does he know, or pretend to know, concerning me?"

"My story will explain everything—that is, everything I know. I am myself a friend of Garrett. He treated me white and I promised him that I would return the favor if ever I got the chance. And I am going to do it now. I may not have acted like a friend when I went into this deal to trap you, but I had got my foot in it and couldn't draw out. You see, it was this way: Lansky told me, when he brought Garrett to my place, that he would pay me out of some diamonds which he had brought from South Africa. He said he hadn't the diamonds with him, but they were not far away. I had heard about the big diamond robbery in San Francisco, and I made up my mind that Lansky was one of the thieves. Two or three times, while he was at the ranch, he went off by himself and was gone each time about half an hour. Early one evening I shadowed him and saw him stop and stoop down beside a tree close to the road. I marked the spot with my eye, and, after Lansky croaked, I went to the tree and dug up the diamonds, or what I supposed to be the diamonds. When I tried to sell them I found they were paste. Lansky had been fooled, and, from what he told me of his associates, I felt sure that James Dorrant was the man who had fooled him. I called at the county jail and asked to see Dorrant, giving my name and residence. I was lucky, for not only was I allowed to see him, but, also, without the presence of either jailers or guards."

"You saw him alone? You are sure about this?"

Nick was astonished beyond measure, for it is one of the rules of every well-regulated jail that a prisoner charged with a capital crime shall not be allowed to converse with an outsider, unless in the presence of an officer of the institution. If this rule had been violated there was something rotten in the management of the San Francisco lockup.

"Sure I am. The guard remained outside. I told Dorrant about the bogus shiners and he laughed, and said he would make it all right for me if I would do a little work for him. I promised, not thinking, at the time, that the work he meant me to do would be against the interests of Roland Garrett."

"Don't you know that Garrett is the lawful owner of the diamonds?"

"No," replied the Russian, in astonishment. "Is that so?"

"Yes, he is Jared Casley's heir."

"Then I'm glad you've stopped my work with Red Whiskers. I didn't like it at the start; I'm plenty sick of it now."

"I'm glad to hear you talk that way," said Nick, kindly. "Now go on with your story."

While Goloff talked Nick kept an eye on the grounds about the ruins of the building, for there was the possibility that the man who had prepared the diabolical contrivance for the death of every person in the building might return to ascertain if the affair had gone off as planned. Nick, while looking down the stairs, had seen upon one side a wire which appeared to have connection with something underneath the stairs. Suspecting the truth, he had not placed a foot upon the stairs, and it was for the purpose of putting his suspicion to a test that he had thrown the stone, which, exploding what must have been a dynamite bomb, had wrecked the building.

"Dorrant told me," Goloff went on, "to go back to my ranch and await the coming of a man who would explain what was required of me. I followed instructions, and the man, he of the red whiskers, came down the next day. He must have thought I would stand for any kind of scheme since I had played in with Lansky, for he was as frank as you please. He said that Dorrant was as anxious to get out of jail as I was to get my share of the diamonds, and if I would assist in that effort he would give me one-quarter of the diamonds, or seventy-five thousand dollars, their value in money. I didn't like the proposition, for I had enough of trouble, and I wanted to get out of California with my wife and go to Texas, where she has relatives, but the thought of seventy-five thousand dollars and what the money would do stifled my scruples. I agreed to stand in before Red Whiskers had exposed his scheme, and, after he had done so, I was too far committed to back out. Dorrant, as I have said, was planning to get out of jail, but there was a man in the way, and the scheme was to capture that man and hold him subject to Dorrant's orders. The man was Nick Carter, the great detective, and Dorrant both hated and feared him. From what has occurred here to-day I believe you are he."

Nick neither admitted nor denied his identity with Dorrant's enemy. But he said: "I have heard that Dorrant challenged this detective to come to the coast. If that be true, he could not have feared Nick Carter."

"I reckon he has changed his tune. The way he was bowled out was a great shock to his conceit. He has discovered there is danger in monkeying with a buzz saw."

"And his desire, if I understand you correctly, is to have Nick Carter captured, not killed."

"Yes, unless his death should become necessary in the preservation of our own lives. He wants to get Nick into his own hands, to deal with him as he sees fit. But he assured me his object was not murder. If it had been I would not have gone into the scheme."

"Red Whiskers appeared not to have your scruples," said Nick. "He took an early opportunity to try to send me to kingdom come. At the same time he was not oversolicitous concerning your welfare, for he must have expected that the explosion would destroy your life, as well as mine."

The Russian's face darkened, and there was an ugly light in his eyes. "Yes, I know that, and that is another reason why I am willing to turn on him and Dorrant. I was to have been used as a tool, and it is now my belief that the agreement to pay me would never have been carried out."

"Of course not."

There was a pause.

Then Nick continued: "You were to assist in getting Nick Carter out of the way, and then Dorrant was to try his plan of escape?"

"Yes."

"Were you to have a part in that arrangement?"

"I suppose so, but I had received no orders. The Nick Carter job was to be done first."

"Do you know what Dorrant's plan is?"

"No. Red Whiskers said it was a winner, though."

"Who is Red Whiskers."

"I have no idea. I never saw him before he came to Alviso, and he has never given me his name. All I know is that he is a friend of Dorrant, and lives in San Francisco."

"Had he any connection with the league of which Dorrant was the leader?"

"No. He told me that he had never seen Dorrant but once before the arrest. He is in some kind of business in 'Frisco, but I don't know what it is. To-day he said that he had no grudge against Nick Carter, and would spare the detective's life if he could do so without endangering his own safety."

"How did he know that Nick Carter would come to this place?"

"Dorrant told him that Nick would be sure to visit my ranch and to look out for him. When you went out to-day—you might as well own up that you are Nick Carter—Red Whiskers was in hiding down the road. He did not follow you, but came to Alviso, where I was waiting. We saw you go into the real estate office and then Red Whiskers said you were certainly the man he was after. That you were seeking me was evident, so the job was put up which brought you to this place. Everything had been prepared against your coming."

"Who owns the place?"

"A man who is now in the State's prison."

"For counterfeiting, was it not?"

"Yes. How did you know?" eying Nick with surprise.

"The evidence is in the cellar. I suppose Red Whiskers made his escape through the tunnel which the counterfeiter used."

"Yes."

"Have you ever been in the tunnel?"

"No."

"Do you know where the outlet is?"

"It is somewhere near the road."

"Toward Alviso or San José?"

"Alviso."

"Then Patsy will have no difficulty in following Red Whiskers," thought the detective, "and I shall have a report when I get to the little town."

Then he said: "Who put Red Whiskers onto this place? You?"

"No. I came here yesterday for the first time."

"Did Dorrant tell him?"

"No. Red Whiskers had known about it for several years."

"Then he must be either a counterfeiter or a crook having acquaintance with counterfeiters."

"If you are to believe his word, he has lead an honest life up to the time of his association with Dorrant. He doesn't act like a crook, though he is a fine actor. You ought to hear his imitations."

"He may be an actor."

"He says he was never on the stage."

Who was this walking mystery, this intelligent, resolute, unscrupulous friend and confederate of a murderer, who had never before engaged in criminal practices, who was a San Francisco business man and yet knew so much concerning criminals and criminal ways? Here was a problem upon which Nick's wits were at once set at work.

CHAPTER IV.

DORRANT PRESSES THE BUTTON.

Nick Carter remained near the wreck of the former headquarters of the counterfeiters until he became satisfied that the mysterious villain with the red whiskers had left the tunnel. Then he released the Russian and instructed him to go to San José, where his wife had found temporary quarters, and await orders.

The detective had determined to trust Goloff. The man was far from being a saint, yet Nick believed that he would keep his promise and work against Dorrant. Goloff had a friendly feeling for Roland Garrett, and Red Whiskers had not hesitated to sacrifice the Russian in the attempt to murder the detective. And, added to these reasons, were Goloff's fear of the law, and his conviction that Dorrant had never intended to keep faith with him in the matter of payment.

"My business in Alviso will probably be finished this evening," Nick said, "and to-morrow I will call on you in San José."

Goloff was effusive in promises to stand by Roland Garrett's friend, and they parted with a hearty handshake.

The detective wheeled into Alviso, and found Patsy awaiting him at the door of the real estate office.

The young fellow hung his head when Nick spoke to him.

"Bad luck, Patsy?"

"Yes, Mr. Carter. I followed the fellow to town, and then he slipped me."

"Tell me all about it," said Nick, kindly.

"Shadowing in a big city and doing the same stunt in an open country and a dinky village are two different propositions. Of course, when I started after my man on the country road he must have seen and spotted me. But what could I do? I couldn't give up the chase. I just had to keep on and trust to luck."

"You were working under a great disadvantage, Patsy. I appreciate your position, and I am sure that you did all that was possible."

"Thank you, Mr. Carter. And now I'll tell you all that happened. I went up the path as you directed me to do and lay down in the grass and watched the road. In about fifteen minutes I saw a man jump the fence about a quarter of a mile below, pick up a wheel, take it to the road and ride like the wind toward Alviso. My own wheel was handy, and I gained on the man sufficiently to see that he wore black, and not red, whiskers. But I believed him to be my quarry all the same. Change of disguise, that was all. Well, he rode into town and dismounted in front of a saloon, that one over there"—pointing across the street. "Now I stopped pedaling for blood and took it easy. I got off my wheel at this place, walked down the street a little way, then crossed and sauntered by the saloon. Just at that time the narrow-gauge train for San Francisco pulled into the depot up the street. There was my man's chance, thought I. I looked into the saloon. He was not there. He must have passed out the back door. I went through the saloon and into the back yard, which is not inclosed, and saw how easy it would be for a man to slip up to the depot without being seen from the street.

"I struck out on a run and got to the depot two minutes before the train started. There was no one on the platform except the agent and the conductor, and the waiting room was empty. There were but two passenger coaches and I went through both and also looked into the baggage and express and saw that brake beam and blind baggage concealed no one. If the man I was after was in either of the cars, I didn't know it. I had never seen him, you know, but I can swear that no man, black whiskers or red whiskers, went off on that train. In fact, the train was light. There were about a dozen women, three old men and half a dozen young men."

"He was one of the old men, probably," said Nick.

After lunch at a restaurant, Nick and Patsy found that two hours must elapse before the arrival of the next train for the north. Down on the wharf, in a secluded place, they discussed the situation.

"Dorrant's agent has escaped us," said Nick, "but we have learned something, nevertheless. The agent—Red Whiskers he was, but he is something else now—is worth

studying. Goloff gave me some of the links in the chain of this man's character. The missing ones I think I can supply, and though, before the present undertaking, he had kept his skirts clear of crime, yet there is reason to believe that before retribution overtakes him he will be ready to go to even greater lengths than his employer, friend or associate, Dorrant."

"The germs of crime must have been in his mental system all these years," said Patsy.

"They are to be found in every son of Adam," replied Nick. "In the majority of cases, however, either through the countervailing influence of beneficent germs, environment or the absence of circumstance, they are bereft of the power for harm. In Red Whiskers' case environment, wholesome fear of the law, lack of powerful temptation, absence of circumstance, in fact, had up to his association with Dorrant made him a respectable member of society. Circumstance, in the shape of overmastering temptation, came, and he fell. He did not, at the outset, fall to the lowest depths, but the barrier which for years had shut in these germs of evil has to-day been swept away and now the man of decent habits and respectable business aims has become a moral monster, capable of any crime.

"I have known many similar cases," continued Nick, "and the rule is that when a man reaches middle life, as this man has, without having transgressed any of the hard and fast ordinances which have been made to govern human conduct for the protection of society, he falls hard. But I would rather deal with such a belated pervert than with the man whose cool, calculating villainy has been the business of a lifetime. The one, even if slightly crooked in mind, like Dorrant, is ever cold-blooded and reasonably cautious; the other is reckless, his brain is ever hot and in a whirl—it takes years for the complete operation of the cooling process, and though possessed of a certain amount of animal cunning, is not to be compared with the man who has perfected his cunning in the school of long experience. When Red Whiskers confronted me a few hours ago, in that room up the road, he had taken a long step downward, but there were depths to which he had not yet descended. Again, circumstances turned the scale for evil. My capture did not follow his command and, presently, his own safety became endangered. Now it was that he took the last, the crowning, step—a step that places him on the same vicious level with Dorrant, the murderer.

"He is a man of parts, his victims have shown that. If not a professional actor, he is a very talented amateur, as has been evidenced by his disguises. But there was one, and he may find it a fatal, omission in his make-up. He neglected to cover his eyes with colored glasses. I shall know those eyes if I ever see them again. The iris was light blue, so light as to be almost colorless, while the pupil, dark, was very large, phenomenally large, I may say."

"By jing," exclaimed Patsy, "one of the old men on the train had just such eyes."

Nick nodded his head.

"I was pretty sure your quarry and mine was one of the old fellows," he said, "for no time was afforded him to make up as a young man." After lighting a fresh cigar, the detective continued: "Putting myself in his place and seeing things with his eyes, I can imagine what he must have felt, what he must have done after he went with such haste into the cellar. Confident of victory while he had the drop on me, he went all to pieces when my escape from the room was followed by your knocking at the back door. He had procured the combination explosive for an emergency. The emergency had come, and, once down the stairs, he set the trap and retreated to the tunnel. With the door half open, he watched and waited until he saw the light of my bull's-eye. Then, believing that the moment of my destruction was close at hand, he hurried to a place of safety. The magnitude of his crime overwhelmed him. He had no desire to go back to make sure that his murderous work had been well done. To his mind, there was no doubt on this score. The work must have been well done, had been well done. But at the outlet he waited ten or fifteen minutes to allow his nerves to settle and also to adjust a new disguise. When he perceived that he was being followed, his suspicions were awakened. For the first time the thought entered his brain that there might have been an error in his calculations. He was not sure on this point until he saw you come to the depot, look about on platform and in the waiting room, and then go through the cars. Now, though in doubt as to my fate, he knows that my assistant is alive. When he reaches Dorrant that astute criminal will inform him that he has made a fool of himself, that I have hoodwinked him and am now on his track."

"It would be a fine stroke if you could prevent a meeting between Dorrant and Red Whiskers," said Patsy.

"You have got another think coming," replied Nick, with a shake of his head. "You spoke without proper consideration of the situation. I wouldn't prevent that meeting for the world. I want them to think that, although their Alviso plan has failed, there has been no chance for me to discover the identity of the man who escaped us to-day. Upon this man's actions hinges the success of Dorrant's plot to escape the hangman. Let the arrangement for the plot go on. You and I and Chick must try to prevent its accomplishment."

"You must have some idea as to the social position of Red Whiskers and also of his facilities for communicating with and assisting Dorrant," said Patsy, with a shrewd glance at his chief's face.

"I have, and unless my conclusions are baseless, I shall be able to place my hands on the man within the next

twenty-four hours. I shall not take the next train for San Francisco. I have business in San José. I want to have another talk with Goloff. You must take the train, however. When you reach San Francisco, go to the office of the chief of police—I will give you a note—and get the length of service and history of every man connected with the county jail. If the chief is not able to furnish that information, go to the sheriff's office. I shall be up on the first train in the morning. Report to my rooms on Powell Street."

The newsboys were crying the San Francisco afternoon papers when Nick arrived in San José. He purchased a *Bulletin*, spread out the front page, saw the portrait of Dorrant, read the headlines and frowned. The item concerning the imprisoned murderer was couched in these words:

"James Dorrant, whose trial on a charge of murder had been set for next Monday, has saved the county a great expense and relieved the prosecution of much work and worry by pleading guilty. The announcement of his intention came as a complete surprise to the officers. Dorrant was taken into court this morning, and after his plea had been entered, he waived time for sentence and the court, being thoroughly acquainted with the facts and also with matters connected with Dorrant's long career of crime, immediately imposed the death sentence, the date of execution to be hereafter determined upon. Dorrant will probably be conveyed to San Quentin prison to-morrow. The warrant of execution will be delivered to the warden in a few days."

Then followed a history of Dorrant's life, a recapitulation of the crime for which he was to suffer death and a complimentary allusion to the skillful work of Nick Carter, the great detective, "through whose matchless efforts this dangerous criminal was brought to justice and the league of crime, of which he was the leader, completely broken up."

It was six o'clock when Nick read this statement in the paper. The last train, over the broad gauge, to San Francisco, would leave in half an hour. It was of the utmost importance that he should take it. The house where he had agreed to meet Goloff was on the way to the depot. Nick called there, had a short conversation with the Russian, pressed some money into the man's hand and then left. At eight fifteen the detective alighted from the train in San Francisco, got into a hack and was driven to the county jail. The chief jailer welcomed him with a smile.

"Your man has saved us a deal of trouble," he said. "His plea of guilty came as a big surprise, didn't it?"

"Yes, yes. And how is he now? In good spirits or down in the mouth?"

"He left here in excellent spirits, Mr. Carter, as if he were going to a ball instead of to his own funeral."

"Left here?"

Nick had feared the worst, he had looked for this announcement, but there had been the faint hope that he might arrive in time to prevent what he now believed to be the finishing touch in a most cunning plot.

"Yes, he is on his way to the State's prison. There was nothing to be gained in keeping him after sentence had been pronounced, and as he was anxious to leave at once, why, we accommodated him."

"When did he leave?"

"About three-quarters of an hour ago. The object was to catch the eight o'clock boat."

"Who went with him?"

"Two of my deputies, of course. They were promised the job immediately after Dorrant's arrest."

"Who were they?"

"Matt Elvin and Carroll Slack."

"Old officers?"

"Yes, both of them, and first-class men."

"One more question: Is Chick still here?"

"No. He followed Elvin and Slack."

"In the same hack?"

"No. He took a street car. He and Dorrant have been as thick as two peas, and to have gone in the hack would have given the snap away. He knows his business, Chick does."

"Was Dorrant handcuffed?"

"Yes, and he had on an Oregon boot, besides."

Nick thanked the jailer and was about to depart when there came an insistent telephone call.

Suspecting bad news, the detective waited.

The jailer took up the receiver, listened a moment and then turned to Nick with an amazed expression on his face.

"It's from the sheriff," he said, "and what do you think? Dorrant has escaped, and the man who assisted him was Matt Elvin."

CHAPTER V.

NICK STRIKES THE TRAIL.

It was in Chief Wittman's office half an hour later that Nick learned the particulars of the escape.

"It must have been arranged shortly after Dorrant's arrest," said the chief, "for the jailer remembers that Dorrant and Elvin were much together about that time. The prospects for an escape from jail were likely canvassed and the idea given up, and the daring, yet really more feasible, plan of escape on the way to the ferry depot was adopted.

"Matt Elvin, who had been taking a few days off, returned to the jail late this afternoon. He had been promised the job of taking Dorrant to San Quentin, and, when he found, and not to his surprise, either, I reckon, that Dorrant had pleaded guilty and wanted to leave the jail right away, he reminded the sheriff of the agreement. There was no objection, for Elvin was regarded as one of the most reliable deputies at the jail and when he, Slack and Dorrant left in the hack for the ferry, ever

body about the jail considered that the murderer was safely booked for landing at San Quentin within an hour. Elvin was in charge, with Slack as assistant.

"Two blocks from the ferry, on a saloon corner, Elvin ordered the driver to stop. There was a cigar store across the street. 'I am out of cigars,' he said to Slack, 'take this half dollar, go over to that store and get some.'

"Slack had no suspicion of wrong, and, taking the money, got out of the hack. He had no sooner shown his back than Elvin, followed by Dorrant, got out by the other door. 'I'll give Jimmy a farewell drink,' Elvin said to the driver. 'We have plenty of time.'

"As the officer and prisoner went into the saloon, the driver noticed that Dorrant no longer wore the Oregon boot, but his faith in Elvin was strong, and he concluded that the boot had been taken off for convenience sake. In a few minutes Slack returned. The driver told him that Elvin and Dorrant had gone into the saloon. Slack was both astonished and angry, and instead of waiting for the reappearance of Elvin and the prisoner, started for the saloon. He was met at the door by your assistant, Chick, who had run across from the ferry. The saloon door was opened and they entered. No Dorrant and no Elvin there. The barkeeper, who was the only person in the saloon, in answer to their hurried questions, said that two men had just passed through the saloon. They had ordered drinks, saying they would return presently. Through the room rushed Chick and Slack, to enter upon a yard with a gate opening upon a side street. They looked up and down the street, but could see nothing of the men. A hobo, leaning against the side of a building not far from the gate, gave them important information. Up to a few minutes before a hack had been standing all day near the gate. Two men had come out of the gate, jumped into the hack and had been driven off. The hack had gone a block, turned a corner and gone south.

"Up to the corner went Chick and Slack, but a look down the street showed no hack. A run down a block and a look in both directions had the same result. It had, of course, been a matter of many and quick turns. Then it was that Slack 'phoned me and the sheriff. We have men out now, as you know, Mr. Carter, looking for the hack. The driver is well known, his standing on that street all day fixed his description in the minds of scores of people, and when we find him we will have something to work upon."

"Is Slack out with the searchers?"

"No, he is in the city prison. I am satisfied of his innocence, but I shall keep him in the lockup until after the investigation. Slack is a married man, has first-class connections, and he and Elvin have never been chums, although they have been many years together in the jail."

"Any ill feeling between them?"

"Not to amount to anything. Slack has never liked Elvin, though he can give no good reason for his dislike."

"I would like to have a talk with him after a while. But first I must get a few pointers from you, chief. I told my assistant, Patsy, to see you and obtain the history of every man connected in an official capacity with the county jail. Did you possess that information?"

"Yes, and Patsy now has it."

"I haven't seen him yet, and I would like to cover Elvin's case now. Would you mind repeating what you told Patsy about this man?"

"Mind? I shall be pleased to do so, Mr. Carter. Matt Elvin is a man of forty-five, I should say, and has been in the jail as deputy for five years. Before that he had been for ten years a police officer, and a good one. He is a bachelor, and the jailer, who is a good judge of men, says he looked upon Elvin as a thoroughly trustworthy officer. He was acquainted with the ways of criminals, was a consummate actor, and has rendered most valuable aid to this office in digging pitfalls under the feet of prisoners accused of serious crimes, in whose cases there was weakness in the evidence for the prosecution. He beats me. To turn in a moment from a saint to a devil! There must be something extraordinary in his mental make-up. He may have bats in his belfry."

For the enlightenment of the chief Nick related his adventures near Alviso, and then added: "But for Dorrant's sudden move, I would have punctured his scheme of escape. The thought that Dorrant would plead guilty never entered my head. In some respects he is a man of almost abnormal cunning, and no man whose own brain is straight can follow all the windings of a brain like that of Dorrant."

"How did you spot Elvin?" asked the chief, who was intensely interested.

"By my powers of reasoning, which are backed, I hope, by common sense. Accepting Goloff's statements regarding the man with the red whiskers as facts, it was plain that Dorrant's agent, not having crime as his vocation, must, in order to understand criminals and the ways of crime, have been connected closely with those who offend the law. That connection could not come if he were engaged in ordinary business. There was one position, and only one, in which such a man could obtain that knowledge, which Red Whiskers evidently possessed, and that was the position of an officer of the law. As a mere policeman would not have the opportunity for close association with Dorrant or any other prisoner in the county jail, it was obvious that the man must be a deputy in the institution. In accepting this solution of the problem I had two facts which gave it coherence and probability. Goloff had been permitted to see Dorrant alone. It was beyond question, therefore, that Dorrant's agent was connected with the jail. The second fact shed light on the criminal association of prisoner and guard. The man with the red whiskers, who appeared in the room in the counterfeiters' joint, had peculiar eyes. They were not only peculiar, but

they resembled the eyes of a man with whom I have had recent dealings, with the eyes of James Dorrant, in fact. Do you see what I am coming to, chief?"

"Yes, and I am amazed at your perception. You are a wonder, all right."

"The conclusion was plain, therefore," Nick went on, "that Red Whiskers was a near relative of Dorrant, probably a half-brother. Dorrant, you know, is half Russian, half American. His father, an American, was a widower when he married Dorrant's mother. If a half-brother, he would, though his ways had heretofore been honest ones, have sympathized with Dorrant and listened to all that scheming villain had to say. In spite of his years of rectitude, there is a strong element of evil in the man. Without risk to himself he would, as a brother, have been willing to assist Dorrant even to the point of escape from the jail, but when Dorrant, as he must have done, artfully broached the subject of the diamonds, and promised that one-half of them, the equivalent of one hundred and fifty thousand dollars in money, should be Elvin's share if he would assume the risk, you can imagine how powerful the temptation was.

"Put yourself in his place and try to enter into his feelings during the conversation which preceded the hatching of the plot, a conversation which was probably something like this: 'Now, Matt,' says Dorrant, 'here is the chance of your life. You are getting on in years, and you are cooped up here, virtually a prisoner, every day of your life. You like the good things of earth, but, never having been able to satisfy your longings, you have moodily accepted the situation and made up your mind to grub along till the end. Go in with me and we'll both have a fortune. We'll leave San Francisco and go to Europe. There we will cut a swell and make things hum. Every day there is a chance for a shrewd man with a little capital to double or treble it. I know the ropes and we'll be millionaires inside of a year. The risk you will take is small. No one suspects our relationship; no one doubts your integrity,' and so on."

"I see," said the chief. "It's a variation of Mephisto and Faust, with the motive the same. Elvin listened and fell."

"That was the result. Then came the plan, which had, as a preliminary, my capture. This proposition was made as smooth as possible by Dorrant. I was not to be killed, if the killing could be avoided. Dorrant knew that the issue would be forced upon Elvin, and so the emergency scheme of the dynamite bomb in the cellar was contrived. But, captured or dead, the escape was to have been pulled off to-day. The hack had been engaged and all other preliminaries settled. It was well done."

The conversation was interrupted by the entrance of Chick and a short, pudgy-faced man wearing a long, seedy overcoat. A peculiar odor emanated from his person.

"Here's your hackman," Chick said to the chief. "Found him in the Mission Street saloon, where he usually hangs out."

"What's there agin' me, chief?" the hackman asked, in a wheezy voice.

That he was a devotee at the shrine of St. John Barleycorn was conspicuously evident.

"You have assisted a murderer to escape," said the chief, severely.

"The deuce you say. Well, you can take my head for a football if this isn't the first I heerd of it." His astonishment, if simulated, was a perfect piece of art.

The chief whispered to Nick: "You take him in hand: I know him for a pretty fair sort of a chap. His only weakness, as far as I know, is drink. I think you will find that he has been imposed upon. His name is Bill Seeton."

"Mr. Seeton," said Nick, "be seated. I wish to ask you a few questions, and mind, I want truthful answers."

"I have nothing to lie about," replied Seeton, surlily. "So bust loose with your queshes."

"When was the arrangement made for the engagement which you filled this evening?"

"Yesterday morning."

"Who engaged you?"

"Matt Elvin."

"You know him, do you?"

"You bet your life. I have knowed him for years. He has put many a buck into my fist."

"What did he say when he engaged you?"

"Said there was a prisoner whose time would be out to-day, who wanted to get out of the city at once so't he wouldn't fall in with any of his old pals. He'd turned goody-goody, and was achin' to take a new deat. Elvin said that he'd promised the fellow to see him out of San Francisco, but as he was on a lay-off, and had an engagement which might use up the best part of the day, he might not be able to want me before evening. To make sure, however, I was to stand all day in a place he mentioned down by the ferry. I had no kick coming, as I was promised a twenty for my work. And I never suspicioned that it wasn't straight goods I was getting, honest I didn't."

"Where did you drive with your passengers?"

"To North Beach, the corner at the end of the car line."

"You are perfectly sure about the place, are you?"

Seeton's red face grew redder.

"Sure? Do you take me for a Jimmy-come-yesterday? I have been in Frisco since '75."

Nick eyed the man steadily for a moment.

"At what time did you arrive at North Beach?" was his next question.

Seeton hesitated for a moment, and then said: "At eight-fifteen."

"To a minute?"

"Yes."

"You looked at your watch, of course?"

"Sure. Elvin asked me for the time."

"I am glad that you had the forethought to look at your watch, Mr. Seeton, for"—consulting a street railway time card on the desk beside him—"I see that the North Beach car must have reached the corner just as you did."

"I didn't notice."

Nick leaned over and whispered to the chief: "Car No. 219 arrived there at eight-fifteen, on its last run. Will you kindly step into the captain's room, phone the railway office for conductor's name and residence. He is probably at home now. When you get the information call up the conductor and ask him if he saw a hack at North Beach at eight-fifteen."

"All right, Nick. I'll be back in ten minutes."

While the chief was away Nick held a short, whispered conversation with Chick, at the conclusion of which Chick left the office. The detective then took Seeton in hand again.

"Elvin paid you twenty dollars for your services, did he?"

"That's what."

"Pretty good pay for one day's work, isn't it?"

"I have made more than that some days."

"And less than that other days."

Seeton looked at Nick sullenly, but did not answer. Instead, he raised his right hand and gave his hat a tilt. The overcoat he wore was brown, and upon the elbow Nick observed a large, black, thick smudge.

"Come here," he said, sternly, to Seeton.

The hackman, with an uneasy expression, arose and approached the detective.

Nick took hold of the man's right arm and closely scrutinized the smudge. "Petroleum," he remarked. "Where did you get it?"

"Blamed if I know. Off one of the wheels of my hack, I reckon."

"You probably reckon right, and if all your reckonings were correct you would be feeling more contented."

Seeton tried to cover his uneasiness by an assumption of bravado.

"Say," he said, with a wheeze and a sniff, "you don't want to get too gay with me. I ain't done nothing, an' I got my rights."

Nick smiled enigmatically. The chief entered and handed him a slip of paper upon which were written these words: "Conductor says he got to North Beach terminus at eight-fourteen and remained there six minutes. No hack passed the corner while he was there."

After reading the report Nick said, quietly: "Call in an officer, chief, and have this man searched."

A button was touched, and an officer quickly appeared.

Seeton's mottled face was pale while the search was being made, but he was too wise to offer any resistance. In his purse were found five twenty-dollar gold pieces and a few dollars in silver.

"As I thought," was the great detective's comment. "Now, Mr. Seeton," he continued, "I will tell you the story of your connection with Matt Elvin. You are not a dyed-in-the-wool scoundrel, but just an ordinary, easy-conscienced, tin-horn grafter. As a hackman of the third class you have had exceptional opportunities to study, with pecuniary profit to yourself, the seamy side of this great city. You have taken chances before, but you have never taken such a dangerous chance as that of to-night. You did make an engagement with Matt Elvin to take him and an alleged discharged prisoner to the outskirts. Your story in that respect is true. But you bade adieu to the truth when you said your trip ended at North Beach. Would you like me to tell you why you lied?"

Seeton's lips moved, but no words came. He sat with staring eyes and with deadly fear tugging at his heart.

"You lied," pursued Nick's cold, cutting voice, "because you were paid to do so. Elvin did not care what you said regarding his engagement, or the start from that rendezvous near the ferry, but it was essential to his safety and the safety of James Dorrant that the destination of the hack should not be known to Chief Wittman or his detectives. So when the journey was ended, Elvin was obliged to show his hand. If he did not use these precise words, he said them in substance: 'Bill, you have been fooled a little. I had to give you a spoonful of con talk, or you might never have taken the job. But its done, you have put your foot in it and you might as well go a step further, especially as it will be greatly to your interest to do so. The man with me is not a discharged but an escaped prisoner. If he is retaken you will profit nothing; if you help a bit in prevention of recapture, you will be the gainer. I will give you not twenty, but one hundred dollars for your work to-night; but on the condition that you tell the officers that I did not leave the hack here, but at North Beach. You can easily say that, for there will be no one to gainsay you. Neither the truth nor the lie will make any difference in your position. The chief will think you have been imposed upon, and the hundred dollars in your pocket will salve your conscience.'"

Seeton's eyes grew bigger than ever. He licked his thick lips and squirmed in his seat, as if a whole regiment of fleas had invaded his person. His amazement bordered on stupefaction.

"Why did Elvin select North Beach as the false destination? Because that place is in an exactly opposite direction from the point at which the hack stopped. Chief, was it not on Sixteenth Street that the experiment of oiling the pavement was begun this morning?"

"Yes, Sixteenth, near Jackson Park."

"That was my impression. In that neighborhood, Mr. Seeton, and not many blocks from China Basin and the

Arctic Oil wharf, you parted with Matt Elvin and James Dorrant."

"It's a lie," Seeton blurted out, desperately. "I was never down that way to-night."

"Oh! yes, you were," Nick said, with cool assurance. "You must have been, for nowhere else on San Francisco's streets could the wheels of your hack become clogged with petroleum. That smutch on your sleeve is fatal evidence against you. Come, own up. Have I told the truth?"

Seeton's nerves, steadied upon his entrance into the office of the chief by his cargo of bad whisky, now gave way. He blubbered and shook, and finally threw up his hands.

"You've got me," he exclaimed; "got me foul. You're the devil, I know, for you could never have found me out, if you weren't. The jig's up. I am it, sure shot. Hang me at once."

CHAPTER VI.

THE NUMBER ON THE CUFF.

What Chief Wittman said to Nick Carter at this juncture has nothing to do with the story. The chief was a great admirer of Nick, and he never lost occasion to express his sentiments. Having said some handsome things, he turned to Seeton.

"You're in a hole, Bill, and I'm sorry, for I thought better of you."

"It was whisky, chief," replied the hackman, between shudders and sobs, "and it has been the ruin of many a good man."

Nick's nose went upward in contempt. But there was moderation in his tone when he said: "Whisky may have had something to do with your case, but you are sober enough now to look the facts squarely in the face. No more lies or evasions, or the last chance will be taken away from you."

"Then I have a chance?" questioned Seeton, eagerly.

Nick shrugged his shoulders. "Perhaps," he replied.

Gathering some comfort from the words, the hackman said, quickly: "Ask me anything you like, and I'll come to the center like a man."

"I'll try you. At what spot did you land Elvin and Dorrant?"

"Jackson Park. That's where I got this daub on my arm. We came down Sixteenth Street and turned at Caroline."

"Which way did Elvin and Dorrant go after you left them?"

"Toward the water."

"They told you they had a boat and intended to sail for the Golden Gate, and asked you to meet them to-morrow morning below the Cliff House, did they not?"

"My God!" ejaculated the hackman, in an access of astonishment. "Were you there?"

"No, I was not there."

Observing the chief's look of wonder, Nick went on: "I don't know what brought the idea into my head. As Hamlet says, 'There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy.' At the moment I seemed to be another man. I was Matt Elvin and I stood by Jackson Park talking to Bill Seeton, and while I talked I knew that I meant to deceive."

After the hackman had been taken away to a cell, the detective proceeded: "And I understand the deception implied. There was in Elvin's mind a doubt that Seeton would be able to successfully carry out his part in inducing you to believe that he had driven to North Beach and left his passengers there. In providing for this event he thought that an offer to meet Seeton below the Cliff House would, if repeated to you, seem like a truthful statement. I don't think that Dorrant had his fingers in this pie. Dorrant, at the time, was probably occupied with other thoughts. Elvin had done so well that he might be left to dispose of Seeton, whom he knew and whom Dorrant did not know, as he should see fit. Therefore, Elvin, assuming that you would believe Seeton after he had exposed the North Beach story, that you would accept as truth the confession in reference to Jackson Park, prepared to govern his own actions accordingly. There was the chance, of course, that you might not be deceived, as there was also the chance that I wouldn't swallow the dose if I were in town. But the risk had to be taken. Of course Elvin and Dorrant went off in a boat, but the destination was southeast, not west. Chick will be here presently and we shall know for certain."

It was half an hour, however, before Chick put in an appearance. His face was flushed from rapid walking, and taking a chair, he wiped away the perspiration. Neither Nick nor the chief said a word, but looked at him expectantly.

"I have covered considerable ground since I left here," Chick began, "and I am satisfied that our men are still in San Francisco. I went to China Basin, the Arctic Oil wharf and other sections of the water front, and found that two men in a yawl put out of China Basin at about eight-thirty, and at eight-forty-five came back, landing, however, at a point above the Basin. Except as to size, the two men, seen by a night watchman and an old bay boatman, did not answer the description of Elvin and Dorrant, but the boat which went out was the same boat

which came back. The men were probably disguised. Where they went I could not to a certainty learn, though I hunted around all over that water-front district. I have an idea, though, that they are in one of the old, tumble-down houses near the Third Street wharf. Not far from one of these buildings I picked up this." Chick held out a small, thick key. Nick took it and passed it to the chief.

"That's an Oregon boot key," the chief said, promptly. "And Dorrant had on an Oregon boot when he left the jail. Chick, I believe you have run them to earth. Elvin probably took his handkerchief from his pocket and the key dropped out. But why should they give up the water trip? Considered it risky, eh?"

"Maybe, maybe not," said Nick. "After they got on the water Dorrant may have taken charge, and thinking over the matter have concluded that the fill-up given to Secton was not a safe proposition. Hence a hurried return to land."

As a better chance of escape would be offered in the darkness than in daylight, the chief, at Nick's suggestion, sent out a dozen men with instructions to watch every side of the building, and also the surroundings, the descent to be made at daylight.

Before Nick and Chick left the office, Slack, the deputy jailer was brought in and rigidly examined. He had a frank, honest face and his story was straight and convincing. He had been completely deceived by Elvin.

"I have been informed," said Nick, "that you have never liked Elvin."

"That is true. He is no friend of mine, though I have never doubted his honesty and loyalty as an officer of the law."

"What is the cause of your dislike?"

Slack hesitated. His face flushed. He fingered the brim of his hat and then scratched his head.

"I suppose I will have to answer," he replied, "though I have never spoken of the matter before. He cut me out with a woman."

"Is the woman still in San Francisco?"

"Yes. I saw her three days ago."

"Who is she?"

"Her name is Cora Reesey, and she lives at No. 1734 Mission Street."

"Alone?"

"Yes. She is a palmist."

"Does Elvin know that you are acquainted with her address?"

"On the contrary, he thinks I believe she is out of the city. I asked him about her last week, and he said that she had gone to Nevada. The name she goes under, on Mission Street, is Madame Ree. I saw her go into the house while I was sitting in a hack in front of a building a few doors below, and I asked the hackman if he knew her, and he said she was Madame Ree."

"What is she, an American?"

"She is half Italian."

"Intelligent?"

"As sharp as a steel trap."

After Slack had gone Nick said to the chief: "I have got some new ideas in my head, but before I speak of them I want to gather in all the threads of this Dorrant-Elvin case. I have not yet had opportunity to talk with Chick regarding the result of his confinement in the county jail as an alleged prisoner. As matters have shaped themselves, it is not likely that, in the short time given him for his stunt of working Dorrant, he has made any important discoveries. When I planned the scheme to have him sent to the jail I believed that Dorrant would stand trial and that Chick's stay in the jail, as Dorrant's cellmate, would cover a fortnight at least. But, in bucking against a crooked mind, I fell a little short of the goal. Now, Chick, for your story, if you have any."

"Twenty-four hours did not give me much of a swing," said Chick, "but I made the most of my opportunities. Dorrant fought shy of me until the report in the morning papers was supplemented by the news of the evening papers, which, after stating that the condition of the man I had assaulted was serious, gave my criminal record. Then Dorrant appeared to take my stock at par value. We were thick friends for two hours. During that time he told me that he had swiped all the diamonds, and that the diamonds would be the means of saving his neck. He never said that he had a friend in the jail, though he did state that he had good friends outside, friends who would stick to him as long as he had a diamond to give away. I asked him about his plans, when he should find himself at liberty, and he said that he intended to go to Europe, but would not leave the coast until he had done up his bitterest enemy, Nick Carter. That gave me the cue for an outburst of savage rage. I cursed you, Nick, up hill and down dale. You had sent me twice to the pen, and I groaned over the thought that I might not be able to lend Dorrant a hand in sending you to the hot place."

Nick laughed. "I'll bet you did your part up to the handle, Chick," he said.

"Dorrant was taken in all right. 'I'd like mighty well to have you go out with me,' the fellow said, 'but I can't make it. I may be in a position to help you at your trial, though.'"

"You knew, of course, that he had pleaded guilty?"

"Yes, and I asked him what that meant. He wouldn't tell me then; said I should know all about it to-morrow. Just before Elvin and Slack came to take him to San Quentin, we shook hands, and at that moment I saw something that I had been endeavoring for hours to see. In the morning he consulted a card several times and acted as if he were trying to commit to memory something that was written or printed on the card. Finally he wrote something on his cuff, then tore the card into bits and threw the bits into the washbowl, turned on the water and saw them disappear down the pipe. The writing on the cuff puzzled me then, and it puzzles me now. It was 'W. B. x 2.'"

"We will consider this puzzle after you have finished your story," said Nick. "It is a clew to something, and probably something important."

"As soon as Dorrant had gone, I spoke to the jailer, put on a disguise which I had ready, and followed the hack. I had no suspicion that an escape, in the manner arranged, was premeditated, but I wanted to make sure that Dorrant got on the boat. I took a street car for the ferry and got there in advance of the hack. This circumstance was not reassuring, for the hack should have arrived first. While I was looking about I saw a hack stop in front of a saloon a couple of blocks away, and two men get out. They entered the saloon, passing under the electric light in front. Although at some distance, I thought I recognized Dorrant's figure, and at once started for the place. You know what I found and—lost."

Nick took a sheet of paper from the desk, and with his pencil wrote upon the paper "W. B. x 2."

"'W. B. x 2.' What do you make of it, chief?"

The chief wrinkled his brows. "Wash Bowl plus two, that's three washbowls. No, no sense in that. Walk Backward—no—Washington Barracks. But what does the plus two mean?"

Nick, who was gazing intently at his paper, smiled. "The address of this Cora Reesey, or Madame Ree, is 1734 Mission Street, isn't it?" he asked.

"Yes," said the chief.

"Then the puzzle is worked out. 'W. B. plus two' means 1734."

The chief's face expressed blank surprise. "How do you figure that out?" was his question."

"In this way," replied Nick, easily. "When Chick spoke of the cuff incident I made up my mind that Dorrant wished to write down a number. He was not willing to trust to his memory. There was too much at stake. He was on the eve of escape and the number, first given him on a card, had something to do with the program after he should have regained his liberty. And what does a number of such importance that it must be placed upon his shirt cuff suggest? Naturally, the number of a house that should give him shelter. I said to you a few minutes ago, chief, that the talk with Slack had given me some new ideas. It has caused me to revise the opinion I had formed concerning Dorrant's movements after he left Seeton's hack. This latest discovery lends strong support to these ideas. The number which Dorrant, in the form of a puzzle, wrote on his cuff, was the number of a house where he has taken refuge to-night."

"How about the key to the Oregon boot, found near one of the buildings, not far from the Third Street wharf?"

"Your officers, who are now on guard, will find, when morning comes, that the men are neither in that building nor in the vicinity. The key was a plant, put there to deceive. The morning's search will, I firmly believe, confirm my theory. It is well, however, that the precaution to have the place watched has been taken. To return to the cuff matter. Dorrant, who is shrewd, while he may have had confidence in Chick, is not the man to bank heavily upon a confidence begotten in such a peculiar way. He took no chances, and, therefore, to prevent Chick from discovering the number, hit upon the disguise of the initials. It is to be presumed that he knew nothing of Slack's acquaintance with the woman who resides at 1734 Mission Street, and he might have believed that if, even after laborious study, the puzzle should be solved, the figures '1734' would mean nothing to the solver. What do the initials 'W. B.' mean? You spoke the word, chief, which proved the open sesame. When you, half in earnest, said 'Washington Barracks,' the light came. 'W. B.,' Washington's Birthday, and that was in 1732. Now, 1732, plus 2, gives 1734. There you have it, but it would be a sorry solution for us if we had not been lucky enough to have obtained that same number from Slack."

"By the great horn spoon, Nick!" exclaimed the chief, "you've struck it, sure. Elvin and Dorrant went out in the boat a short way for the purpose of disguising themselves. Then they put back to another wharf, dropped

the key to fool us and separated, with the understanding that they were to meet later at 1734 Mission Street."

"And there they expect to remain until they are ready to set out to dig up the diamonds," was Chick's comment.

"And the diamonds are buried near Alviso," supplemented Nick Carter.

CHAPTER VII.

THE RAID ON NO. 1734.

"The diamonds are buried near Alviso," repeated Nick, "and Dorrant's intention is to take the early morning train for San José. No. 1734 Mission Street is but a short distance from the Valencia Street depot. So he hasn't far to walk."

"Your reasons, Nick?" queried the chief. "It is pretty late, and I ought to get a few hours' sleep before starting to-morrow's big work, but I could sit up with a relish all night to hear you discourse."

"I, too, need a nap," rejoined the detective, "and so does Chick, for that matter, but under the circumstances, I shall make a night of it. But I won't detain you long. Did you ever play 'Hide the Handkerchief'? Of course you have. Then you will probably remember how excited you were when any of the searchers approached close to the hiding place. When the searchers were cold, that is to say, when they were far away from the handkerchief, you heaved a sigh of relief. When they were hot—close to the handkerchief—the perspiration sometimes stood on your brow. James Dorrant has, figuratively speaking, hidden a handkerchief, and he thought, at one time, that I was on a hot spot. He desires my life, but he wishes to do the murderous job himself. He would never have sent Elvin to Alviso for the sole purpose of having me killed or captured. He was thinking about the diamonds. There was possibility that I might be near his plant. He trembled at the thought that I might discover the treasure. But he did not confess these fears to Elvin. It was another story he told, the story Goloff told me. There is point number one. Point number two was Dorrant's presence in Alviso the night before Chick rescued Roland Garrett, and killed Michael Lansky. What was Dorrant's business in Alviso? There was nothing on hand, as we now know, except the plan to murder me, and I was in San Francisco. Dorrant postponed an important engagement in order to make the trip out of town. His business was not with Garrett, for I asked Garrett if he talked with Dorrant that night, and he said they conversed a little, but the talk was of no importance. Garrett said something else, however, and that was to the point. He furnished the information that Dorrant left the Lansky ranch in the middle of the night without even taking the trouble to bid Lansky good-by. What was the object of this sudden flight, and where did he go? I have an idea where he went, and if he ever gets to Alviso I intend to test it.

"As I have said before, the plot to escape was conceived shortly after Dorrant's arrest. Every detail was carefully planned. Cora Reesey, who had been out of the city for some months, was recalled and established at 1734 Mission Street, near the depot. In going here for a night's stay the object was, I believe, to prepare a disguise that should baffle the eyes of the best detectives, in case any should be on the watch at the railway depots to-morrow morning."

"They will be there, Nick. You know we have prepared for that emergency," said the chief.

"I know, but you don't know Dorrant as well as I do, and I don't know him as well as I would like to. If I could crook my mind I might be able to follow every turn of his brain. I don't think Elvin will go with Dorrant to San José and Alviso. Still he may intend to go, out of self-interest. But one man, and one man only, will do the diamond digging, and that man, of course, will be Dorrant. Therefore No. 1734 Mission Street must be watched as well as the building down by the wharf."

"I am short of men," said the chief, "but I can spare three."

"Three will do. I'll have Patsy help out, and Chick and I will be there."

"And I will be there with Chick and Nick," added the chief.

The arrangements were made before one o'clock in the morning, and Nick, in a new disguise, that of a tramp, with a roll of blankets strapped to his back, in due time passed No. 1734 Mission Street, turned a corner, the lower floor of which was occupied by a grocery store, found that the wagon gate of the back yard was not locked, and entering, espied an open shed partly filled with boxes and odds and ends. To this shed he went, and, sitting down, removed his roll of blankets, and, using it for a pillow, prepared for a rest, which did not include sleep.

No. 1734 was one door from the corner. All the buildings were of wood and two stories in height. Stores occupied the lower floors. The upper stories were devoted

either to offices or lodging purposes. Before leaving for Mission Street Chief Wittman had telephoned the owner of the block at his residence, near the Presidio, and ascertained that Madame Ree had leased the entire upper story of No. 1734 for one year.

A few minutes before five o'clock Nick arose to his feet. He had just completed an examination of the boxes and litter of the shed and yard when Patsy entered through the gateway.

"Everything is in fine shape," he whispered to the detective, "and three minutes from now Chick and the chief will enter at the front. The lock was picked half an hour ago."

In the division fence there was a small gate. Opening it, Nick and Patsy passed into the yard of No. 1734. Then Nick whispered: "Get behind that barrel yonder and watch the second-story window. If either Elvin or Dorrant comes out of it, rope or other fashion, give the alarm and use your gun if necessary."

Patsy nodded and hurried to the barrel. Nick picked up a stick of oak stove wood, then went to the open stairway, built against the outer wall, a stairway no longer in use but a relic of the days when the present sanitary arrangements did not prevail, and quickly ascended to the upper landing. The door in front of it was boarded up, but by its side was a window. Nick tried to open it, but it resisted all his efforts. Sounds from the front prompted the action which he now took. Raising the stick of wood, he smashed the glass of the window and sprang into a corridor, to come face to face with a tall, handsome woman of olive complexion. She was fully dressed, and when she saw Nick, she smiled sneeringly. As he returned her look, her expression changed to one of terror, and quickly entering the room, she closed and locked the door.

Nick threw his whole weight against it, the lock gave way and he dashed into the apartment. A shout from Patsy, the swift skurrying of feet in another part of the second floor, and several shots fired in quick succession, following Nick's entrance into the presence of Cora Reesey or Madame Ree. Believing that his assistance outside was not required, the detective gave his whole attention to the woman, who, sitting in an easy-chair, was regarding the intruder with angry eyes.

"You are at liberty to examine everything," she said, in a sharp voice. "There is no man here."

"I believe you," Nick replied, quietly. "I did not expect to find anyone here but you, Miss Reesey."

"You seem to know me pretty well, Mister Policeman," she snapped. "And now," her ample bosom heaving with indignation, "what do you want? Matt Elvin has been here, but he is not here now. I did not ask him to come, but I could not drive him away."

"No, I suppose not. But I'm not concerned, at this moment, with the fortunes of Mr. Elvin. I am interested in the case of Mr. Dorrant. Where is he?"

"Your fellow coppers are probably through the examination of the other rooms by this time. Ask them."

One of Wittman's men appeared at the door. "We've looked into every hole and corner outside this room," he said to Nick.

"Where are the chief and Chick?"

"They are chasing somebody over the roofs. Haven't been down yet to learn what has happened. Perhaps they have got both men, Mr. Carter."

"I'll go down and investigate. Remain here and keep an eye on this woman until I return. Wait a moment. I haven't searched the room, for I'm satisfied there is no one in hiding here. However, to be sure, I'll take a look."

The investigation proved the truth of the woman's statement and the correctness of the great detective's conclusion. After it had been made Nick took his leave.

At the foot of the stairs in front Chick was encountered. "We've got Elvin, or what's left of him," he said, "but Dorrant can't be found. I was about to go upstairs again for another look."

"He's not there. Have all the yards been searched?"

"Yes, and the chief has all the neighborhood on the lookout, and officers, just arrived, are going through all the rooms in the block."

"Is Elvin in a condition to speak?"

"No, and he never will be. He's a dead one, all right."

A slight shade of disappointment overspread Nick's face, but it was quickly dispelled.

"How did it happen?" he asked.

"In a curious way. It seems Elvin was in hiding in the little storeroom, and aforetime laboratory, that opens out of the madame's reception room. There's a skylight above it and Elvin got out on the roof when we invaded the building. Patsy saw him and gave the alarm. The chief and I went through the skylight and chased him to the end of the block. We could have shot him easily enough, but we thought we had a cinch on collaring him alive. The shots we fired were scarers, but they didn't

scare worth a cent. Elvin kept right on over the roofs. At the corner of the block he looked down and saw a wire hammock, which he could easily drop into. The wires," continued Chick, "were not strung for a hammock, but for the branch telephone office in the second story, at the corner, and the laundry next door. What does the blame fool do but grab the wires and try to crawl to the post. If his hands had touched the telephone contingent the shock might have made him howl and drop to the ground with no more injury than a broken leg or arm. But as fate would have it, he sought an acquaintance with the electric wires of the laundry, the wires that furnish exercise for the trolleys, and about five thousand volts of juice proceeded to hold carnival on his body. He never let out a scream, but just doubled up and stayed there. When the chief's men got a ladder and yanked him down he was deader than a herring."

"His career of crime was short," said Nick. "But justice is satisfied, and you and I, Chick, have no cause for complaint."

"He might have told us where we can find Dorrant, Nick. It looks to me as if this jump off has cheated us out of the fat thing we have been playing for."

"To a man on the ground it does look that way, Chick, but for a man up a tree there is a broader view. We'll talk about this later. I've something on hand now. Go upstairs, relieve the policeman who is on the woman's room, and stay there until I come to you. I shall have something to say to Madame Ree when next we meet."

Nick walked to the grocery corner, then crossed the street to a fruit and vegetable stand. Although it was not yet six o'clock, the proprietor was opening up for the day. Nick waited until, upon large trays in front, had been placed an assortment of citrus fruits and field berries, and then entered into conversation with the proprietor, at the conclusion of which he left the stand and went around the corner. The fence inclosing the back premises, had, like the grocer's, a wagon gate. It was closed, and Nick did not attempt to open it, as a large knot hole near it permitted opportunity for a satisfactory inspection of the yard. The detective's attention was directed toward several large, red chests, used for the transportation of berries. There was a pile laid lengthwise and one standing on end. By the side of it was a stack of shallow, empty boxes. Nick's knowledge of California, its resources, the ramifications of the orchard and berry businesses, the methods of production and marketing, was extensive and thorough. He knew that the shallow boxes had been taken from the drawers of one of the chests, presumably the one standing on end. These drawers were without bottoms, the boxes, flimsily constructed and used for retail purposes, resting upon narrow cleats, nailed to the drawers' sides. Each chest bore the one address: "Andrea Massona, Wildwood Ranch, Alviso."

Another thing which Nick took note of was that each chest appeared to be locked. Over the end opening, which receives the drawers and their contents, was a hinged door. Each door was furnished with a hasp, and this hasp passed over a staple and was fastened by a padlock.

Back to the proprietor of the stand went the detective to learn much concerning the prosperous berry business of Andrea Massona, of Alviso. He was on his way to No. 1734 when he met Chief Wittman.

"You could not have shown yourself at a more opportune moment," said Nick, as he grasped the chief's outstretched hand. "I need your assistance."

"And you shall have it, of course."

"Where is the body of Elvin?"

"Down at the next corner, in a drug store. I am waiting for the coroner. He ought to be here now. Any trace of Dorrant?"

Nick looked the chief in the eye for a moment without speaking. They he said, gravely: "Chief, you and I are friends. We understand each other and we trust each other."

"All the time," was the emphatic response.

"That being so," Nick went on, "I shall make bold to ask a favor. Don't insist upon hearing what my suspicion is, for it is a mere suspicion, not a tangible fact. I have a strong reason for asking this favor. You are part and parcel of the governing force of San Francisco. But there are limitations to your powers. You may use discretion, but even that has its restrictions. I am differently situated. The motive, the end to be achieved, with each of us is precisely the same, but my position is unlike yours in that it gives me greater latitude, more discretion. I am not bound by the set rules which govern your office. Now, if I were to tell you what I suspect, and why I suspect, you might, and probably would, deem it your duty to act contrary to my wishes. In your heart you might applaud my plan, but your official judgment would condemn it. I do not wish to place you in an embarrassing position. All I ask is, leave me to my own devices, and the result will justify me, I firmly believe."

The chief's eyes sought the sidewalk. He had a dim idea of the situation. Should he try to thoroughly fathom

it? No, he would not bother his head with the matter. The man who had been speaking was Nick Carter, and Nick Carter could be trusted to the world's end.

"You have struck a clew, Nick," he said, with a smile, "and you want to tackle it single-handed. Be it so. In the dark, as I am, I don't suppose I could interfere with you if I wished. But I shan't butt in. We've settled Elvin, and I leave it with you to settle Dorrant. Ah! there is the coroner. Do you want to see him?"

"Yes."

They went to the drug store, and the coroner, who knew Nick well, gave him a hearty handshake.

"I am in a hurry," the detective said, "and if you will immediately turn out the pockets of the dead man, I shall be obliged."

"Certainly, Mr. Carter. Come with me."

Money, keys, an account book, tobacco and various odds and ends were the results of the exploration of the pockets.

"Nothing of any value," commented the chief.

There was a key ring, with keys of different shapes and sizes, and one loose key, small, thin and resembling a pass key, though it had not been made for that purpose.

"If you will permit me to take this key," said Nick, "I will see that it is returned."

"It is of no use to us, to the law," replied the coroner. "Keep it as long as you like."

The detective had hoped to find the key in the pocket of the dead conspirator, and his face was bright, and his step firm and assured as he left the drug store. Back to the room of Cora Reesey he went, to find Chick and the woman engaged in earnest conversation.

"We were just talking on general principles," explained Chick, with a blush, as he greeted Nick.

"Airy nothings, eh?" said the detective, pleasantly.

"This is no funny business," Miss Reesey retorted, with a venomous expression.

"Not for some people, I'll admit."

Nick found a chair, seated himself and then took out his notebook. On a blank page he wrote with a pencil for several minutes, then tearing out the leaf, handed it to Chick, who, after reading it, arose and left the room.

"Now," said Nick, when he was again alone with Cora Reesey, "we'll talk business. First, a piece of news. Matt Elvin is dead."

"Good riddance to bad rubbish," she exclaimed, in fierce joy.

"So that's it, is it? Not sorrow, but rejoicing. That suits me, for it gives me a better understanding of your case. It was not love of Elvin that brought you back to San Francisco, but love of diamonds. Elvin probably promised you half of his share. Now that he is dead, you hope to receive not only your own share, but his. Vain hope, and vain your confidence in the word of Dorrant. He cheated his partner, Lansky, and he would have cheated Elvin, if Elvin had lived, and Dorrant had succeeded in securing the treasure."

Again that murderous look in the eyes of the woman of mixed blood.

"You have no love for me," Nick went on, in a smooth, even voice, "and you would try to kill me if you thought you could do so without danger of discovery. But nothing must stand in the way of the scheme you and Dorrant have arranged for obtaining those costly, those beautiful gems. Let me tell you that you will never get your share or any share of them. One reason why you will not is that you stand an excellent chance of spending many years of your life in the State's prison."

The woman's face blanched. Her confidence, never seriously disturbed during the intruder's talk, all at once deserted her. Her look of terror upon seeing the hobo come through the window had been assumed. She had not then suspected his identity, but had supposed him to be a policeman in disguise. Her retreat to her room had been made, not through fear, but for the purpose of gaining time. Elvin might be captured, for all she cared. But the other man must be assisted, for in her reasoning, every moment's delay for the officers increased the chance of Dorrant's success. She knew all about Nick Carter, through conversations with Elvin and Dorrant, and as she noted the air of calm superiority, of rock-ribbed masterfulness of the man before her, she became convinced that she was in the presence of the great detective. Although the knowledge gave her uneasiness, it did not affright her, for she believed that the plan Dorrant had formed, and which was now in the final stage of execution, was so subtle, so ingenious, as to defy detection. Her own position she had not, up to this time, seriously considered. Nick Carter had now brought it home to her.

"I—I have done nothing for which the law can punish me," she said, with a strong effort at self-control. "You cannot prove that the men came here at my invitation. You cannot even prove that I knew who Elvin's companion was."

"The circumstantial evidence already at hand, Miss

Reesey, will be sufficient to satisfy any honest-minded jury that you conspired to assist a murderer to escape. And other evidence will be forthcoming. I shall take care of that."

She winced. The pupils of her eyes dilated, and she stared straight into his face, but did not see him. She saw, instead, the whitewashed walls of a prison cell, and herself clutching at the iron bars of the window and peering, like a caged animal, at the happy passers-by in the street below, reproduction of the scene she had often witnessed when she was one of the passers-by and not the poor, despairing wretch at the window. A long breath, a lump in the throat and then, in spite of her resolution, the tears came into her eyes. Defiantly brushing them away, she said, with quivering lips: "You are to be congratulated, I suppose, on the delicate, the altogether charming way in which you have placed my situation before me."

"I am the agent of justice," said Nick, gravely. "My methods are sometimes stern, but circumstances, a decent regard for the welfare of the people who obey the law, a regard even for the moral well-being of the wrongdoer, warrant their use. You are a woman with an easy conscience. You have never dabbled much in crime, though you have strong capabilities for evil. It is well that measures should be taken to check your course before it leads you to the gallows. A few years in prison ought to give you a practical, a wholesome view of things of which, at present, you have false conception."

"I don't care to hear you preach," she said, coldly. "If you have anything of immediate interest to say, say it. I want to know exactly where I stand. What do you want?"

"I'll tell you in a moment, Miss Reesey."

Nick's eyes had been sweeping the apartment and were now fixed upon an enlarged portrait, framed, which was hanging against the wall near the bureau. The portrait was that of a dark-faced, black-bearded man of thirty-five or thereabouts. In the eyes, and in expression, there was a resemblance to the woman before him.

"Who is the original of that portrait?" the detective asked.

"My brother," she said, shortly.

"Italian, I should say."

"His father was an Italian."

"Is he alive?"

"Yes."

"Would you mind giving me his name?"

For an instant she hesitated, but unable to resist the compelling look which he bent upon her, she replied: "Andrea Massona."

"Andrea Massona," repeated Nick, gazing at her steadily, "and a resident of Alviso. Does he know that it is Dorrant's intention to visit him to-day?"

Cora Reesey uttered a despairing cry. "You are the devil," she said.

"Thank you," politely replied the detective.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE TRACKER AND THE TRACKED.

For a few minutes silence reigned in the room. Cora Reesey's brain was in a tumult. The blow he had dealt staggered her. But her recovery was rapid. All was not yet lost. The main prop of the edifice of deceit which she and Dorrant had so carefully constructed had not been removed.

"Do you know where Dorrant is at this moment?" Nick asked, with a queer smile.

"No, and I don't care. I told him to get out, and he went."

"I think he went of his own accord, Miss Reesey, and I have a notion that it will not be hard to strike his trail."

The woman gazed intently at Nick's inscrutable countenance for a moment. Then she laughed softly.

"This is the time, Mr. Carter, when you will find yourself up a stump."

"Think so?" said Nick, in soft inquiry.

"I am sure of it."

The detective smiled. When he spoke it was with a quiet assurance that sent a sober look into Miss Reesey's eyes. "I may not be able to make transportation connection so as to render possible a call on you this evening," he said, "but you take the word of a man who has succeeded oftener than he has failed, that sometime to-morrow I shall appear before you with the announcement that Dorrant is either dead or in jail, and that the diamonds, valued at three hundred thousand dollars, have been recovered. By the way, you were counting on possessing some of those diamonds, were you not?"

If looks could kill, Nick Carter would have fallen dead at that moment.

"They are sour grapes, as far as you are concerned, Miss Reesey. Come, open your heart. I hold all the cards."

"I don't believe you. I am a woman, and you have tried to scare me. I'll never confess."

"As you like," returned Nick, indifferently. "Your confession might help some, but I can get along without it. James Dorrant at this moment is concealed in one of the berry chests in the back yard of the fruit store at the corner."

The woman gasped. Figuratively speaking, she threw up her hands. "I said you were the devil, Nick Carter," she exclaimed, when she was able to speak. "You are more. You beat the devil. You can give him cards and spades and beat him."

"The chest is without its complement of boxes," pursued Nick, paying no attention to Miss Reesey's outburst, "so that with its bottomless drawers, it affords fine shelter for a man whose neck is in danger. When I left you a short time ago I believed that Dorrant was not far away. His destination is Alviso, but to reach the town in the ordinary way, as train passenger, by wagon or afoot, would entail too great a risk, on account of the hue and cry that has followed his sensational escape. But reach there he must, and without delay. While casting about in my mind for probable ways and means by which a fellow of Dorrant's shrewdness and ingenuity would solve the problem of escape from San Francisco, my eye was attracted by the display of fruit and berries at the corner stand. The great berry section of Central California is in the vicinity of Alviso. Shipments during the season, now opening, are made every day, and every day the chests bringing the berries are returned. Here was a chance for Dorrant, surely, if a reason could be found for the shipment back to Alviso of a full and not an empty chest. A talk with the proprietor of the stand supplied a reason. He had a customer who dealt in fruit as well as berries, retailing his wholesale purchases as well as his field products. Nearly every day, in fact, one of the return chests contains oranges or bananas, or both.

"I left the fruit man to look at the back yard, taking care to do so without being observed by my man in the chest, the ends of which, as you know, have perforations for ventilation. What I saw almost, but not quite, convinced me that Dorrant was in one of the chests, a chest which stood on end and near a pile laid lengthwise. It was not empty, like the others, for by its side was a stack of boxes used to fill the chest's drawers. All the chests were padlocked and were to be returned to-day to Andrea Massona, Wildwood Ranch, Alviso. Walking back to the stand, I had another talk with the proprietor. One of the chests, he said, contained oranges and the order had been filled yesterday afternoon. I was satisfied, from the fruit man's appearance, his frankness and the utter absence of suspicion that he is not in collusion with Dorrant. He had prepared one of the chests for the usual return service, but the chest would probably take, not oranges, but human merchandise. Being about the same weight as the fruit, it would be received and transported by the railway employees without suspicion of the truth.

"I left the fruit man, almost convinced that Dorrant was in that chest. If there was a substitute for oranges, the change must have been made in the night and by Matt Elvin, and if Matt Elvin did this, he must have unlocked the padlock and the key must be in his pocket. The key was in his pocket, and here it is."

Cora Reesey said nothing. Her period of amazement had passed. She was quite prepared to expect anything from this man of marvelous insight.

"The finding of the key," Nick continued, "strengthened my faith in the chest theory. The discovery made a few moments ago that you are the sister of Andrea Massona removed the last vestige of doubt from my mind."

Miss Reesey now spoke in a nervously eager voice.

"If you had reason to believe that Dorrant had hidden in that chest, why didn't you open it and arrest him?"

Nick's eyebrows lifted slightly. "The reason ought to be apparent to a woman of your discernment," he said, in mock surprise. "Arrest him now? Oh, no; that would never do. There are the diamonds, you must remember. If I arrested him this morning in San Francisco, I might never recover the treasure. But if I permit him to go to the Massona ranch I can use him as a catspaw. See?"

Miss Reesey gave a hysterical laugh.

"Wouldn't Dorrant grit his teeth if he could hear you talk!"

"I expect, as the Yankee would say. Yes, he shall find the diamonds for me, and when he shall have found them I intend to take possession both of the diamonds and the man. He can't escape, for I shall make provision for every contingency. He is as safe to the law, to justice, as if he were in his cell at San Quentin. Therefore, you must perceive that I have little use for any information you possess, unless you can tell me where Dorrant has concealed the gems."

"Somewhere in the vicinity of Alviso," she said; "just where I do not know. If I did know, I would not tell

you. He never told me, and I don't believe he has ever told anyone."

"I agree with you. Dorrant never told, for two reasons. One is that it is too valuable a secret to disclose, the other that his intention has ever been to keep all the diamonds himself. Now, Miss Reesey, although, as I have said, I don't think you have any inforation of value, still, as satisfaction to my curiosity, I would like to know how you contrived to substitute a human being for oranges, without taking into your confidence or exciting the suspicion of the man who keeps the fruit store and whose wagon will take that chest and some others to the depot. I can imagine how it might have been done, but I would like to have you tell the story."

Cora Reesey, who having perforce accepted the situation and was now in a calmer mood, laughed and said: "It was no trick at all. The fruit dealer had to be fooled, and that was easy. He does not know that I am Andrea Massona's sister, nor does Andrea himself know that I am domiciled here on Mission Street. The fruit dealer, whose name is Pierson, has been my brother's agent for several years. He receives and disposes of the berries and sometimes ships back oranges or bananas, for my brother keeps a retail wagon going in the streets of San José the year round. This house was selected as my headquarters because it was near the depot, and also for the reason that it was near Pierson's store, which has a convenient back yard. Yesterday the consignment of berry chests from my brother's ranch arrived. The mail of the same train that brought the chests carried an order for a chest of oranges, the oranges, as had been the custom heretofore, to occupy the space in one of the empty berry chests. That order was forged, and by me. It was given into Elvin's hands before he left for Alviso to look you up, Mr. Carter, and mailed at Alviso. Mr. Pierson filled the order before dark last evening. His store closed at eight o'clock. Before Dorrant arrived—he came at half-past nine, Elvin about an hour later—I had transferred all the oranges to another place. Dorrant, as the oranges' substitute, was in the chest before midnight. The position is not very uncomfortable, for the chest is long and deep and there is plenty of air."

"Where did you get the key with which you unlocked the padlock?"

"Brought it with me from my brother's ranch. On my way to San Francisco I stopped there a few days. The locks for the chests are all alike, and my brother has a supply of duplicate keys. He needs them, for once in a while Pierson, his agent here, who requires one, loses his."

"Where did you put the oranges which you took from the chest?"

"In an empty barrel in a corner of the yard, and covered the top with trash. Pierson may not discover the oranges for some time. When he does he will wonder where they came from."

"After Elvin arrived you handed him the key, and he saw Dorrant safe in the chest and then locked it. That is so, isn't it?"

"Yes."

"Elvin, in disguise, was to have gone on the train with Dorrant. He must have arranged a disguise out of the ordinary."

"It was that of an old woman, and would never have been penetrated. He was an actor and a master of disguise," said Miss Reesey, confidently.

"You forget his eyes."

"Belladonna and spectacles would have cured that defect. Anyhow, the risk would have been taken."

"Now, as to your brother. Does he know you are here?"

"No."

"Then I infer that he does not know that Dorrant is coming to the ranch to-day."

"He is entirely in the dark. My brother is an honest man, Mr. Carter. We never intended to let him into the conspiracy. The chests, under the usual conditions, should reach the ranch to-night. The rule is to have them dropped at Santa Clara, three miles from San José, so that my brother's driver may call for them after his day's peddling is over."

"Then there was planned a deviation from the usual course?"

"Yes. It was on the program that Elvin should go on with the train and get off at Santa Clara."

"And what, then?"

"Once off the train he was to hire an expressman to take the chests to my brother's ranch. Elvin was to go on with the chests and aim to reach the ranch when my brother should be out in the berry field. I posted Elvin, for I know my brother's ways, as I lived at the ranch several years."

"Well, what was to have been the next move?"

"The chests were to be deposited in a large shed, the heavy chest unlocked, and at the first opportunity Dorrant was to get out, go to an adjoining barn and hide in

the hay until nightfall. At ten o'clock, when my brother would be in bed, Elvin was to steal out, and meet Dorrant, who, having the diamonds, would then give Elvin his and my share of them."

"A very pretty program," commented Nick, dryly, "but as I have said before, the part so pleasing to you would never have been performed. Dorrant would never have returned to that ranch. If he were in love with you, and had succeeded in getting the diamonds, he might have kept his promise. But he isn't, for you never met him before last night."

"No," with a sigh of regret, "I have known him but a few hours. If only I could have kept him here a week."

"How would you have disposed of Elvin?"

"Oh! we were friends, simply; nothing more. He had another flame."

"Did you know that he was Dorrant's half-brother?"

"Yes."

There was a pause. Nick looked at his watch. It was six-thirty o'clock. "The train, combination freight and passenger, which must take that chest," said he, "is scheduled to leave at eight-thirty, is it not?"

Miss Reesey smiled, though the smile was not a pleasant one.

"Yes," she replied.

"I shall take that train. By the way, you have here the tricks for that old woman disguise for Elvin that you spoke of, have you not?"

"Of course," she answered, without divining the motive for the question.

"Good. As Elvin is dead and, therefore, cannot go, I shall be his substitute." Then he continued: "I want to say that the statement you have made is of value. You have said more than I thought you would. True, I could manage the affair without the knowledge I have gained from you, but I can manage it better with that knowledge. For your frankness you have my thanks. Now, as to your own case. You are a sensible woman, and you will, I am sure, go quietly to the city prison. Your detention will be short, for immediately upon my return from Alviso I shall lay your case before Chief Wittman, and my representations will be sufficient, I believe, to obtain your release. To be plain with you, I have exaggerated your danger. There is really not much of a case against you, for though you and I know there was a conspiracy, it would be hard to prove it to the satisfaction of a jury, especially as you are a handsome and fascinating woman."

Cora Reesey tossed her head, but her vanity was flattered, nevertheless.

Nick proceeded: "And there will be the further fact to consider, if Dorrant is recaptured, namely, that no real harm has been done. So, under the circumstances, and in particular consideration of the fact that there will be no desire on the part of anyone to make complaint against you, I think you have good cause for thanking your lucky stars. Within forty-eight hours you will probably be enjoying your liberty as usual."

"So you have been playing with me, have you?" she said, slowly.

"In a manner, yes," said Nick, coolly.

"I hate you, hate you, Nick Carter, and some day you will be sorry for this." She rose to her feet, her lips quivering with rage.

The detective also arose, opened the door and whistled. The policeman, whom Chick had, in accordance with his penciled instructions, stationed at the head of the front stairs, quickly appeared.

"You will take this woman to the city prison," said Nick. "Lock her up, and then report to Chief Wittman that she is to be held until my return."

"Are you going away, Mr. Carter?"

"For a day; that's all."

Before Miss Reesey left, Nick said to her: "Nothing except the disguise shall be taken from this room. I may experiment some with your paints and powders, but I will leave them in good order. When I go away I will lock up and have the keys sent to you."

"Thank you," she spitefully replied. "Your condescension is equaled only by your nerve."

"I always keep it by me, Miss Reesey. It's a valuable asset."

In resolving to go on the train to Santa Clara, Nick was simplifying a plan which he had formed before Miss Reesey had made her statement. He believed that without the knowledge of Dorrant's whereabouts, which he had obtained, the woman would never have said a word that could have been construed into a betrayal of the trust that Dorrant had reposed in her. She well knew that without her revelations Dorrant would be captured. And what she had said was in the line of detail, and was said for the purpose of smoothing her way to freedom. She now knew that she had been cheated. But the harm was done, and she had no redress.

As for Dorrant, his reliance on the woman, his inability to learn whether or not she had escaped, his confidence in

his own security, based on the fact that he was still safe in the chest, would, in all probability, cause him to accept the old woman, who was in charge of the chests, as Miss Reesey.

Nick's written instructions to Chick sent that faithful assistant and Patsy off on the regular narrow-gauge train for Alviso at six-forty-five. Nick himself occupied Miss Reesey's room for three-quarters of an hour in perfecting his latest disguise.

The eight-thirty mixed train for Santa Clara and San José carried as one of its passengers an old woman, spectacled and veiled, and as part of its freight a berry chest holding James Dorrant, the escaped murderer.

CHAPTER IX.

AN AWFUL VISITATION.

The car which bore the berry chests was the property of a valley fruit exchange, of which Andrea Massona was a member. Goods transported over the road in this car were not waybilled, the consignee at each end taking all risks. No robbery had ever occurred, and there was never any confusion in identification, as each chest or box had a large, plain label or address.

Nick Carter did not believe he would have any difficulty in assuming charge of the chests when they should be deposited on the platform of the Santa Clara depot. As a usual thing, the station master paid little or no attention to matters not exclusively within his jurisdiction, but if he should be present when the transfer to the express wagon was being made, and should ask questions relative to the change in time of removal, as well as the change in receiver, the detective was prepared with satisfactory answers.

In due time the train pulled up at Santa Clara. Nick, as the old woman, plainly and respectably attired, descended to the platform and stood by while the Santa Clara consignment in the fruit car was being removed. Luckily there was an express wagon among the few vehicles which had come from the town to await the arrival of the train. The driver, having no business on hand, was engaged for the job of hauling the chests to the Massona ranch.

"And I am to go with you," said Nick.

The train had gone and the driver was making ready to load the chests into the wagon, when the station master came up, a telegram in his hand.

"I reckon you have a right to take away these chests," he said, to the driver, "but you'll have to leave one behind, according to the latest advices."

"What's the matter?" asked Nick, in a sharp falsetto.

"Mistake. This telegram says—it's from Pierson, consigner, S. F.—'Hold at station heavy berry chest Massona, Wildwood. Wrong order filled.'"

Here was a surprise, and it was undoubtedly intended as a checkmate. Nick grasped the truth at once. The telegram could have emanated from but one person, and that person was Cora Reesey. Enraged both at the trick which the detective had played upon her, and at the destruction of the plot to secure the fortune in diamonds, she had found means to send the wire, hoping that it would prevent Nick Carter from using Dorrant as a cat's-paw. The telegram, while evidence of a scheme to knock in the head Nick's plan to recover the diamonds, was also evidence that the sender cared little for the personal safety of Dorrant.

"I understand what she is up to," said the detective to himself. "She is willing that Dorrant should be retaken, and her hope is that after he is again behind bolts and bars she may be able to induce him to tell her where he has hidden the treasure. And with all hope gone, he might tell her. A very ingenious move, my lady, but it may not win."

At the time Nick did not speculate as to how Cora Reesey had contrived to send the telegram. It afterward occurred to him that she might have met Slack, her old admirer, at the city prison. Slack might have been released by the chief, there being no substantial reason for detaining him longer, and meeting Miss Reesey, might have been induced, under the spell of her enchantment, to send the telegram. Nick conjectured a plausible story by which Slack's objections, if he had had any; could have been overcome. She might have told him that she had been acting as her brother's agent, and that the telegram was meant to correct a mistake made when she was nervously distraught over her personal troubles. The using of Pierson's name, she might have assured him, was for the purpose of insuring compliance with the order.

As was subsequently ascertained, the great detective's conclusion was the right one. Slack had been released on bail just as Miss Reesey was entering the City Hall on the way to her cell. He had had opportunity for a short conversation with her, and his love for her, never having waned, was increased at the sight of her distress. She readily told him that she had been promised her freedom within forty-eight hours, and also that she had long since

ceased to care for Matt Elvin. And now Elvin was dead and her languishing eyes met those of the enamored patrolman, and the rest for her was easy.

After pondering the situation, Nick said to the station master: "Have you any authority to act?"

"No," was the quiet reply, "but I can make trouble. You are not going to act contrary to the instructions in this telegram, are you? If you are, you'll get yourself in a mess. I'll phone Massona's driver in San José, and in half an hour he'll be over here. In the meanwhile Jim, here"—indicating the driver—"has sense enough to stand by me."

The detective saw that one way out of the difficulty was closed. There was another, entailing some risk, but he resolved to try it.

"All right," he said. "We'll stand the heavy chest up against the side of the waiting room and then go on to Alviso with the other chests."

By tilting, instead of lifting, the heavy chest was moved off the platform proper and against the side of the little, wooden building. Back of it and within a few feet of the spot where the chest had been placed was a long shed, the front open. Here the teams of farmers and orchardists were temporarily stationed during their owners' absence in town.

Having placed the chest in position, the driver of the express wagon proceeded, at Nick's order, to load the remaining chests into his wagon. While thus occupied, the detective, observing, to his satisfaction, that the station master had gone into his office, stepped to the heavy chest, unlocked it, and then, with his mouth near one of the perforations, rapidly whispered: "Somebody in San Francisco suspects. You must get out. As soon as you hear the wagon move away, come out, go through the shed behind the station, cross the track and strike through the field for the Alviso road. I'll stop the wagon half a mile down and wait for you. Do you understand?"

A husky voice replied: "Yes, yes. And I'll remember this, Miss Reesey."

The program was carried out without a break. Dorrant slipped out of the chest, and fifteen minutes later was picked up on the road by the wagon. He was disguised as a tramp, and when he asked for a ride might have been refused if Nick had not been on the seat with the driver.

Dorrant could not see the face of the old woman on account of the veil, but up to this moment no doubt had entered his mind that she was not Cora Reesey. He climbed into the bed of the wagon and sat down with his back against one of the empty chests. Nick, looking over his shoulder from time to time, could see the murderer's hat and a portion of his head. The situation was a peculiar and interesting one, and the detective smiled as he considered it. Here within a few feet of him, riding amicably along a country road, was his deadly enemy. The scene was a peaceful one and the air, filled with the invigorating ozone of a California spring, caressingly fanned his cheeks. Nick wanted to smoke, but as such a proceeding would be out of keeping with his assumed character, he was forced to deny himself the pleasure. But, as he fingered the cigars which he had had the forethought to place in the pocket of his dress, a thought, provocative of a grim smile, struck him. Taking out one of the cigars, he leaned over the seat and threw it so that it lighted in Dorrant's lap.

"T'anks," came the answer, in the wheezy voice of the hobo, "youse has hit me where I bunks."

Nick was remarking to himself that the pastoral phase was likely to be soon succeeded by the dramatic, when, around the corner from a side road, just ahead of the wagon, dashed an automobile. Its advent was so sudden, the noise it made was so terrifying, that the two horses attached to the wagon snorted in fright, and then started on a furious runaway. The driver tried to control them, but in vain, and Nick was about to lend his assistance when the animals wheeled and made for a lane leading to a dairy farm. The turn was made so sharply that the wagon overturned and men and chests were hurled with violence to the ground. Nick struck the ditch upon his stomach, and he lay deprived of breath, but with sound bones, for at least a minute. When his breath returned he was seized with excruciating pains. But luckily they lasted but a short time, and as soon as he could he lifted himself up and gazed about him.

Up the bank the driver was sitting rubbing his head, but there was no sign of Dorrant. The wagon had gone and so had the horses. Could it be possible that Dorrant had managed to retain his seat? If so, he must now be at the dairy farm. Nick looked up the lane and saw that the horses had stopped. Then he turned and spoke to the driver. "Where did that hobo go?" he asked, still in his character of the old woman.

"Danged if I know," the driver grunted.

The detective went to the road. While the runaway was in progress he had taken no observation of his surroundings. Now he saw that the overturn had occurred

within half a mile of the ruins of the counterfeiters' former headquarters. With a light of understanding in his eyes he hurried across the road, and, looking along the fence on the field side, saw, a quarter of a mile away, a man running. The man was keeping close to the fence and his head was bowed, as if he desired to escape observation from the road. Returning to the road, Nick ran swiftly in pursuit.

Near the gate opening into the grounds which held the ruins a man left a position behind a clump of trees on the opposite side of the road, and with the words: "It's all right," approached Nick, who had stopped.

The newcomer was Chick.

"I was up a tree," he said, "and just before you came up he vanished at the spot where you said he would, in the tunnel."

"Good. And Patsy?"

"He is in the ruins with Goloff."

"Then the game is made. Dorrant will be in there sometime—he may not, in fact, if left to himself, come out until night."

"The program is to wait, I suppose?"

"Yes. It's the safest and the surest."

A short distance down the road Nick and Chick crossed to the fence and saw the entrance to the tunnel. It was from this point, used then as the outlet, that Matt Elvin, as the man with the red whiskers, had escaped after his encounter with Nick at the opening of this story.

From various circumstances the great detective had formed the opinion that Dorrant had selected the tunnel for the hiding of the diamonds. On the night of his disappearance from the Goloff Ranch he had gone in that direction. It was not only an excellent place for the purpose, but it also had distinct advantages as a hiding place for a fugitive. Dorrant, occupying a lower position than Nick on the wagon, had probably suffered no injury, and had promptly taken advantage of the accident to betake himself to the underground retreat.

In the high grass, near the mouth of the tunnel, the presence of which, before the appearance of Dorrant, had been obscured by a pile of brush, Nick and Chick sat and waited. It was not yet noon, but it was oppressively warm. There had come an atmospheric change within the last half hour. Not a breath of air stirred, and the sun above was blood red. Its light was subdued by an unusual blackness in the sky. There were no detached clouds, and yet there was an obscuration of the heavens such as is sometimes seen during a partial solar eclipse.

"What do you make of this, Nick?" asked Chick. "I have got a peculiar, nervous feeling. Seems to me as if something was about to happen."

Something did happen. First came a low rumble and then a movement of the earth's surface that sent the two detectives tumbling backward. For what seemed to be a minute, though the oscillations lasted no longer than a dozen seconds, they were rocked as if in a heavy cradle. Then the movement ceased. The earthquake was over.

Nick arose tremblingly to his feet, to utter an exclamation of amazement.

"Look, Chick," he said, "the tunnel has caved in."

And so it had. From where they stood they could see that the cave-in extended to the ruins. The entire tunnel roof had collapsed.

As they ran along the side of the depression they met Patsy and Goloff coming from the ruins. The same look was in the eyes of the four men.

"He is probably dead," said Nick, sententiously. "But," he added, "we must have spades and dig for him. Patsy, Goloff, go and rustle up four spades, shovels or any old thing that will do for digging. Hurry!"

Spades were brought and for hours the work proceeded. Just before dark the body of James Dorrant was uncovered. He lay flat on his face, dead.

Nick turned the body over. One hand clutched a leathern belt. The detective disengaged and lifted it. The weight told its story. The stolen diamonds were found.

* * * * * * *

Three days later Nick, Chick and Patsy were on the Southern Pacific Limited, bound for New York.

"It was a good clean-up," said Chick to Nick, "and Chief Wittman says San Francisco is yours whenever you feel disposed to claim it."

"Yes, it was a good clean-up, all things considered. And yet, Chick, I believe I made one mistake. I was too lenient with Cora Reesey."

"Nonsense, Nick. She's not so bad."

"No, not now, perhaps. But I fear she will develop into a terror, and I have a premonition that some day she will again cross my path."

"And then leniency won't have the call, eh?"

"It depends."

THE END.

Next week's issue, No. 433, will contain "The Pirate of the Sound; or, Nick Carter's Midnight Swim."

NICK CARTER WEEKLY

THE BEST DETECTIVE STORIES IN THE WORLD

383—Kidnaped in Broad Daylight; or, Nick Carter on His Own Trail.
384—The Little Giant's Double; or, The World's Two Strongest Men.
385—The Secret Order of Associated Crooks; or, The Confederated Criminal Trust.
386—When Aces Were Trumps; or, A Hard Game to Play.
387—The Gambler's Last Hand; or, The Little Giant Wins Out.
388—The Murder at Linden Fells; or, The Mystery of the Cadillac Needle.
389—Mercedes Danton's Double; or, A Plot for Many Millions.
390—The Millionaire's Nemesis; or, Paul Roger's Oath of Vengeance.
391—A Princess of the Underworld; or, The Mysterious Burglary at Lakeview.
392—A Queen of Her Kind; or, A Beautiful Woman's Nerve.
393—Isabel Benton's Trump Card; or, Desperate Play to Win.
394—A Princess of Hades; or, The Reappearance of Dazaar, the Fiend.
395—A Compact with Dazaar; or, The Devil Worshiper's Den.
396—In the Shadow of Dazaar; or, At the Mercy of Vampires.
397—The Crime of a Money-King; or, The Battle of the Magnates.
398—The Terrible Game of Millions; or, Tracking Down the Plotters.
399—A Dead Man's Power; or, The Mystery of a Telephone Number.
400—The Secrets of an Old House; or, The Crime of Washington Heights.
401—The House with the Open Door; or, The Double Crime of Madison Avenue.
402—The Society of Assassination; or, The Detective's Double Disguise.
403—The Brotherhood of the Crossed Swords; or, The Little Giant's Mighty Task.
404—The Trail of the Vampire; or, The Mysterious Crimes of Prospect Park.
405—The Demons of the Night; or, The Terrors of the Idol's Cavern.
406—The Captain of the Vampire; or, Smugglers of the Deep Sea.
407—A Bank President's Plot; or, Three Villains of a Stripe.
408—The Master Criminal; or, With the Devil in His Eye.
409—The Carruthers Puzzle; or, Nick Carter's Best Disguise.
410—Inez, the Mysterious; or, The Master Criminal's Mascot.
411—The Criminal Queen's Oath; or, The Difference Between Two.
412—The Point of a Dagger; or, The Criminal Queen's Madness.
413—Doctor Quartz, the Second; or, The Great Freight Car Mystery.
414—Doctor Quartz, the Second, at Bay; or, A Man of Iron Nerve.
415—The Great Hotel Murders; or, Doctor Quartz's Quick Move.
416—Zanoni, the Woman Wizard; or, The Ward of Doctor Quartz.
417—The Woman Wizard's Hate; or, A Dangerous Foe.
418—The Prison Demon; or, The Ghost of Dr. Quartz.
419—Nick Carter and the Hangman's Noose; or, Dr. Quartz on Earth Again.
420—Dr. Quartz's Last Play; or, A Hand with a Royal Flush.
421—Zanoni, the Transfigured; or, Nick Carter's Phantom Mascot.
422—By Command of the Czar; or, Nick Carter's Boldest Defiance.
423—The Conspiracy of an Empire; or, Nick Carter's Bravest Act.
424—A Queen of Vengeance; or, Nick Carter's Beautiful Nemesis.
425—Daring Dan, the Human Mystery; or, Nick Carter's Smoothest Foe.
426—Dan Derrington's Double; or, Nick Carter's Terrible Test.
427—The Great Gold Swindle; or, The Little Giant's Masterpiece.
428—An East River Mystery; or, Nick Carter's Daring Leap.

All of the above numbers always on hand. If you cannot get them from your newsdealer, five cents per copy will bring them to you by mail, postpaid.

STREET & SMITH, Publishers, 238 William Street, NEW YORK

BUFFALO BILL STORIES

Containing the Most Thrilling Adventures of the Celebrated Government Scout "BUFFALO BILL" (Hon. William F. Cody)

161—Buffalo Bill's Blockhouse; or, Old Nick Wharton's Strategy.
162—Buffalo Bill's Canyon Cache; or, The Beauty from Butte.
163—Buffalo Bill and the Great Sunstone; or, The Trick that Trapped the Duke of the Dagger.
164—Buffalo Bill's Wildest Ride; or, The Monster Serpent of the Bad Lands' Lake.
165—Buffalo Bill and the Greengoods' Cabal; or, The Woman with the Manacled Arm.
166—Buffalo Bill's Lightning Shot; or, The Red Gulch Rescue.
167—Buffalo Bill's Bandit Friend; or, The Mystery of the Black Riders.
168—Buffalo Bill at Bay; or, The Claim Jumper of Silver Gulch.
169—Buffalo Bill's Dark Drive; or, Manton, the Mountain Mystery.
170—Buffalo Bill's Fair, Square Deal; or, The Duke of the Dagger's Dead Lock.
171—Buffalo Bill's Bold Brigade; or, Injun Joe's Burrow.
172—Buffalo Bill on a Hunt for Gold; or, The Lost Mine of the Cimarrons.
173—Buffalo Bill's Ride for Life; or, Fighting the Border Cattle Thieves.
174—Buffalo Bill's Double; or, The Mephisto of the Prairie.
175—Buffalo Bill and the Claim Jumpers; or, The Mystery of Hellgate Mine.
176—Buffalo Bill's Strategy; or, The Queen of the Crater Cave.
177—Buffalo Bill in Morenci; or, The Cat of the Copper Crag.
178—Buffalo Bill's Dead Drop; or, The Ghost-Scout of Colorado.
179—Buffalo Bill's Texan Hazard; or, The War Trail of the Apaches.
180—Buffalo Bill's Blindfold Duel; or, The Death Feud in Arizona.
181—Buffalo Bill's Mexican Feud; or, The Bandits of Sonora.
182—Buffalo Bill's Still Hunt; or, The Masked Men of Santa Fé.
183—Buffalo Bill's Fiercest Fight; or, The Captive of the Apaches.
184—Buffalo Bill's Navajo Ally; or, The War with the Cave Dwellers.
185—Buffalo Bill's Best Shot; or, Saving Uncle Sam's Troopers.
186—Buffalo Bill's Girl Pard; or, The Mystery of the Blindfold Club.
187—Buffalo Bill's Eagle Eye; or, The Battle of the Staked Plains.
188—Buffalo Bill's Arizona Alliance; or, Navajos Against Apaches.
189—Buffalo Bill's Mexican Adventure; or, The White Indians of Yucatan.
190—Buffalo Bill After the Bandits; or, Chasing the Wyoming Bank Robbers.
191—Buffalo Bill's Red Trailer; or, The Hole-in-the-Wall Outlaws of Wyoming.
192—Buffalo Bill in the Hole-in-the-Wall; or, Fighting the Wyoming Bank Robbers.
193—Buffalo Bill and the Bandit in Armor; or, The Mysterious Horseman of the Mountains.
194—Buffalo Bill and the Masked Mystery; or, The Wild Riders of the Wilderness.
195—Buffalo Bill in the Valley of Death; or, The Masked Brotherhood.
196—Buffalo Bill in the Land of Fire; or, Nick Nomad, the Mountain Wanderer.
197—Buffalo Bill in the Den of Snakes; or, The Search for a Ton of Gold.
198—Buffalo Bill's Nebraskan Quest; or, The Secret Brotherhood of the Platte.
199—Buffalo Bill and the Hounds of the Hills; or, The Traitor Trooper.
200—Buffalo Bill's Young Partner; or, The Outlaw Queen's Cipher Message.
201—Buffalo Bill's Great Search; or, Bagging Bad Birds in Wyoming.
202—Buffalo Bill and the Boy in Blue; or, The Ghost Dancers of the Bad Lands.
203—Buffalo Bill's Long Chase; or, Nervy Frank's Leap for Life.
204—Buffalo Bill's Mine Mystery; or, Conquering the Brotherhood of the Crimson Cross.

All of the above numbers always on hand. If you cannot get them from your newsdealer, five cents per copy will bring them to you by mail, postpaid.

STREET & SMITH, Publishers, 238 William Street, NEW YORK

Diamond Dick Weekly

CONTAINING THE

MOST UNIQUE AND FASCINATING TALES OF WESTERN ROMANCE

397—Diamond Dick, Jr.'s, Stratagem; or, Ferreting Out the Land Thieves.
398—Diamond Dick, Jr., Deceived; or, Gentleman Joe's Sister.
399—Diamond Dick, Jr.'s, Queerest Case; or, The Lions of Lodestone.
400—Diamond Dick, Jr.'s, Closest Call; or, The Strike at the Anaconda.
401—Diamond Dick, Jr.'s, Abduction; or, The Mix-Up at Peaceful Pocket.
402—Diamond Dick, Jr., in the Ozark Hills; or, The Vendetta of Death.
403—Diamond Dick, Jr., and the Moonshiners; or, The Pirates of Big Stone Bend.
404—Diamond Dick, Jr., in Arkansas; or, Fighting the Flatboatmen.
405—Diamond Dick, Jr.'s, Clean Score; or, Beating the Nabob of Buckskin Bar.
406—Diamond Dick, Jr., and the Wreckers; or, The New Recruit from Call-Down.
407—Diamond Dick, Jr., and the River Thieves; or, The House-Boat Mystery.
408—Diamond Dick, Jr., and the Showman; or, Handsome Harry's Circus.
409—Diamond Dick, Jr., and the Haunted House; or, The Ghosts of Quivaro.
410—Diamond Dick, Jr.'s, Long Shot; or, A Misplay at Tonto Pass.
411—Diamond Dick, Jr., and the Circus Sharps; or, Crooked Work at Flushville.
412—Diamond Dick's Black Flyer; or, The Raid of the Tickabo Terrors.
413—Diamond Dick's Treasure Train; or, Run Down on the Trestle.
414—Diamond Dick, Jr.'s, Night Ride; or, The Fight for the "Way-up-in-G" Mine.
415—Diamond Dick's Signal; or, The Sympathy Strike at Skiplap.
416—Diamond Dick and the Sandbaggers; or, Queer Work in the Private Car.
417—Diamond Dick, Jr.'s, Dutch Mascot; or, Wet Goods at Tickabo.
418—Diamond Dick, Jr., and the Serpent Queen; or, The Secret of the Peso-la-ki.
419—Diamond Dick's Specter; or, The Phantom that Won Out.
420—Diamond Dick's Pay Car; or, Foiling the Hatchet-Boys.
421—Diamond Dick in Grubstake; or, How the Trappers Were Trapped.
422—Diamond Dick and the Bond Thieves; or, Handsome Harry's Barrel of Trouble.
423—Diamond Dick, Jr.'s, Mid-Air Battle; or, The Death Trail of Lightning-that-Strikes.
424—Diamond Dick, Jr., and the Black-Hands; or, On the Trail of the Freebooters.
425—Diamond Dick's Lone Hand; or, A Game of Tag at the Tin Cup Ranch.
426—Diamond Dick, Jr., and the "Knock Down" Men; or, A Mix-Up at Forty Miles an Hour.
427—Diamond Dick, Jr.'s, Switch-off; or, A Close Shave at Razor Gap.
428—Diamond Dick's Christmas Gift; or, A Full House at Pocomo.
429—Diamond Dick Among the Mail Bags; or, A Round with the Postal Grafters.
430—Handsome Harry's Hard Fight; or, The Queer Mystery of the Five Ace Gang.
431—Handsome Harry on the Wolf's Trail; or, The Train Robber's Ambush.
432—Handsome Harry's Strangle Hold; or, The Pretty Demon of the Rockies.
433—Handsome Harry's Quickest Shot; or, Drawing the Sting from a Gila.
434—Handsome Harry's Trump Card; or, The Bad Man from Texas.
435—Handsome Harry's Lightning Stroke; or, The Mutineers of Misery Gulch.
436—Handsome Harry's Fierce Game; or, The Moonshiner's Oath.
437—Handsome Harry in Chinatown; or, The Highbinders' Crimson Compact.
438—Handsome Harry in the Bad Lands; or, A Fight for Life in the Bandit Belt.
439—Diamond Dick, Jr.'s, Castle in the Air; or, The Deadly Duel with Riatas.

All of the above numbers always on hand. If you cannot get them from your newsdealer, five cents per copy will bring them to you by mail, postpaid.

STREET & SMITH, Publishers, 238 William Street, NEW YORK

YOUNG ROVER LIBRARY

Adventures of THE AMERICAN HARKAWAY

THE unflagging interest taken in the fortunes of the immortal Jack Harkaway by young boys, and old boys as well, has for thirty years been one of the marvels of the publishing world. These stories seem to be just as eagerly sought after and devoured to-day as when first issued, and myriads of readers **Idolize the Bold and Unconquered Jack** in much the same spirit as they do good old Robinson Crusoe. In fact it has become a household name. And yet, there has always been something like a spirit of keen disappointment among American lads because this hero happened to be a Britisher. At last believing the time is ripe to remedy this one defect, we now take pleasure in presenting a new series, in which, from week to week will be chronicled the wonderful adventures and madcap pranks of a genuine Yankee lad, who certainly bids fair to out-Harkaway the famous original of this type. In the energetic and restless Link Rover a unique character has been created, so bold and striking that we confidently expect his name to presently become quite as familiar among our American boys as those of Frank Merriwell or Buffalo Bill. These **Stories of Adventure and Frolic** at school and abroad are written especially for this series by Gale Richards, who is under exclusive contract to devote his whole time and attention to this fascinating work. There is not a dull line from beginning to end, because Link Rover believes it is his especial duty and privilege to keep things constantly "humming." So be fairly warned that to commence reading of his strange experiences is to acquire the "Rover habit," which clings to one like a leech and is very hard to shake off.

Following is a list of the numbers already issued or in press:

1—Link Rover, the Scapegrace; or, The Black Sheep of the Family.
2—Link Rover at School Abroad; or, Lively Times at Old Swindon.
3—Link Rover as a Wizard; or, The Yankee Firebrand in an English School.
4—Link Rover's Balloon Voyage; or, Fun and Adventure Among the Clouds.
5—Link Rover Among the Carlists; or, Playing a Bold Game with the Dons.
6—Link Rover Adrift; or, Pranks and Perils on the Mediterranean.
7—Link Rover in Algiers; or, Waking Up a Sleepy Oriental City.
8—Link Rover's Strange Legacy; or, The Audacious Lark at Malta.
9—Link Rover's Chase; or, A Yankee Innocent Along the Nile.
10—Link Rover's Menagerie; or, Lively Times with the Scapegrace.
11—Link Rover, the Wonder-Worker; or, Surprising the Hindoo Jugglers.
12—Link Rover's Jumping Idol; or, Mad Pranks in a Chinese Temple.
13—Link Rover's Pirate Junk; or, The Strange Cruise of the *Howling Ghost.*
14—Link Rover in America; or, In Search of Fun at the "Golden Gate."
15—Link Rover's Wager; or, Mixing Them Up on the Limited.
16—Link Rover Among the Mormons; or, A Madcap Frolic in Old Salt Lake City.
17—Link Rover's Warning; or, The Ghastly Sell on Sheriff Bowie.
18—Link Rover's Glorious Lark; or, Making a Holy Show of the Train Robbers.
19—Link Rover Stranded; or, Finding Fun on the Road.
20—Link Rover's Camp Fires; or, A Jolly Journey with the Hoboes.
21—Link Rover on Guard; or, Tricks Played on Travelers.
22—Link Rover's Discovery; or, A Very Hot Time at Denver.
23—Link Rover Trapped; or, The Bursting of a Bubble.
24—Link Rover and the Money Makers; or, Something Not Down on the Bills.
25—Link Rover in Chicago; or, Making Things Fairly Hum.
26—Link Rover's Strategy; or, Smoking Out an Old Enemy.
27—Link Rover Among the Shanty Boatmen; or, A Roaring Voyage Down the Mississippi.
28—Link Rover's Flying Wedge; or, Football Tactics on a River Steamboat.
29—Link Rover's Crusoe Island; or, A Campaign of Humor in the Flood.
30—Link Rover's Surprise; or, The Mischief to Pay.
31—Link Rover Among the Cotton Pickers; or, Hustling for Fun Down in Dixie Land.
32—Link Rover's Tame Scarecrow; or, The Astounding Racket "Daddy" Played.

A new number every week. Price, FIVE CENTS, at all newsdealers, or by sending direct to the publishers.

STREET & SMITH, 238 William Street, New York